

BALZAC.

VOL. II.

THE PURSE.

THE BALL AT SCEAUX.

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THE
CAT AND BATTLEDORE,
And Other Tales.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

THE PURSE. THE BALL AT SCEAUX.

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LA BOURSE.

TO SOFKA.

HAVE you not remarked, mademoiselle, that the painters and sculptors of the middle ages, in placing two faces in adoration by the side of a beautiful saint, have never failed to impress upon them a filial resemblance to her. When you see your name among those which are dear to me, and under the protection of which I place my works, call to mind this touching harmony, and you will find in this dedication, not so much an act of homage, as the expression of the fraternal affection which your humble servant De Balzac, has sworn to you.

There is, for those minds which open freely, a delightful hour which succeeds the moment when the night has not yet fallen, though the day is no more. Twilight then sheds its soft hues and strange effects on every object, and encourages a reverie that vaguely mingles with the play of light and shade. The silence which almost always reigns at this instant renders it more particularly dear to artists, who meditate, place themselves at some distance from the picture at which they can no longer labour, and criticize it; saturating themselves with its subject, whose hidden meaning then stands revealed to the inner eye of genius. He who has not dwelt in silent thought beside a friend during this hour of poetic dreams, will find it hard to understand its unspeakable delights. Under cover of the clear-obscure, the material artifices employed by the

artist to produce the appearance of reality entirely disappear. If the work in hand be a picture, the persons depicted in it seem to speak and walk: the shadow becomes shadow and the daylight is daylight, the flesh lives, the eyes move, the blood courses through the veins, and the stuffs shine. The imagination aids the naturalness of each detail, and suffers only the beauties of the work to be seen. At this hour illusion reigns despotically; perhaps it rises when the sun sets. (Is not illusion an intellectual night, which we people with dreams?) At this hour illusion unfolds its wings, carries the mind away to an ideal world—a world fertile in voluptuous fancies, and in which the artist forgets the world of reality,—yesterday, to-morrow, the future, everything, even his privations, good as well as evil.

At this magic hour, a young painter of

great promise, who loved art for its own sake, was mounted on the double ladder which he used in painting a large and lofty picture, which he had almost finished. There, as he blamed and praised his own work with the utmost impartiality, and abandoned himself to the current of his thoughts, he lost himself in one of those reveries which enchant, enlarge, flatter, and console the heart. His reverie must have been a long one. Night came on. Whether it were that he tried to come down from the ladder or made some unguarded movement in the belief that he was standing on the floor (the result prevented him from exactly remembering how the accident occurred), he fell, his head came into contact with a stool, he lost all consciousness and remained motionless for a period the duration of which was unknown to him. He was aroused by a gentle voice from the

kind of swoon in which he had been buried. When he opened his eyes, a glimpse of vivid light made him close them again promptly; but through the mist which enveloped his senses he heard the chit-chat of two women, and could feel two young and timid hands supporting his head. He soon recovered his senses, and could see by the light of one of those old lamps, called double ventilating lamps, a young girl's head, the most exquisite that he had ever beheld—one of those heads which are often regarded as a mere painter's whim. This head, however, realized the beau-ideal which every artist imagines, and which is the source of his talent. The face of this young stranger belonged, so to speak, to the fine and delicate type of the school of Prudhon, and possessed also that poetical air which Girodet gave to his fantastic figures. The freshness of the

temples, the regularity of the eyebrows, the purity of the outlines, the marks of maidenhood so clearly imprinted upon every feature of the face, made the young girl a perfect creature. Her figure was slender and supple; her limbs delicate. Her dress, which was neat and simple, did not bespeak either riches or poverty. On recovering his self-possession, the painter expressed his admiration by a look of surprise, and muttered some confused acknowledgments. He found that his forehead was being pressed by a handkerchief, and recognized, in spite of the smell peculiar to studios, the powerful scent of ether, which had, no doubt, been used to recover him from his swoon. Then at length he noticed an old woman, who resembled the *marquise* of the *ancien régime*. She was holding a lamp and giving directions to the younger stranger.

“Sir,” replied the young girl to one of the inquiries made by the artist, while still under the influence of the disorder which the fall had introduced into his ideas, “my mother and I heard the noise which you made in falling upon the floor, and fancied we heard a groan. The silence that followed the noise of the fall alarmed us, and we came up in a hurry. Finding the key in the door, we fortunately took the liberty of coming in, and found you lying motionless upon the floor. My mother went to look for something to make a bandage with, and to bring you round. You have hurt your forehead, there; can you feel it?”

“Yes, now I can,” replied the artist.

“Oh! it won’t be anything serious,” pursued the old mother. “Luckily your head fell upon that mannikin.”

“I feel infinitely better,” replied the painter. “All I want now is a vehicle to

take me home. The porterness will go and get one for me."

He wanted to express his thanks to the two strangers, but at every phrase he uttered the elder lady cut him short with the words,—

"Take care, sir, to apply some leeches or to get yourself bled to-morrow; drink a few cups of vulnerary, and take care of yourself; falls are very dangerous things."

The young girl looked furtively at the painter and at the pictures in the studio. Her face and her glances showed nothing that was not becoming; her curiosity looked like abstraction, and her eyes seemed to express that interest which women take, with graceful spontaneity, in all our misfortunes. The two strangers seemed to forget the painter's works in the presence of the suffering painter. When he had set their minds at rest with regard to his condition,

they left the room, looking at him the while with a solicitude that was quite free from being either pronounced or familiar. They did not harass him with questions or seek to inspire him with a desire to become acquainted with them. Their interest was perfectly natural, and in good taste. Their noble and simple bearing at first produced but little impression upon the painter, but afterwards, when he recalled all the circumstances of the accident, he was very much struck by their behaviour.

When they had reached the floor which lay beneath that on which the studio was situated, the old lady quietly said,—
“Adelaide, you left the door open.”

“In order to hasten to my assistance,” said the young painter, with a grateful smile.

“Why, mother, you yourself ran down immediately,” replied the young girl, blushing.

“Would you like us to go down with you?” said the mother to the artist, “the staircase is very dark.”

“No thank you, madame, I am much better now.”

“Keep a good hold on the balustrade.”

The two women remained upon the landing in order to light the young man while they listened to his footsteps.

In order that the reader may understand all the raciness of this little drama and the surprises which it presented to the painter, we must add that it was only a few days since that he had fixed his studio in the upper story of this house, which was situated in the obscurest, and therefore the muddiest, part of the Rue de Suresnes, almost in front of the Madeleine and only a few steps from his lodgings, which were in the Rue des Champs Elysées. The renown which his talent had procured for him, had

made him one of the most highly esteemed artists in France, so that he was now leaving want behind him, and was enjoying, to use his own expression, his last struggles with poverty. Instead of going to work in one of those studios which are to be found near the barriers, and whose moderate rents were proportioned to his former modest earnings, he had gratified his daily recurring desire to avoid a long journey, and the loss of that time which had now become more valuable to him than ever.

No one in the world would have inspired so much interest as Hippolyte Schinner if he would have consented to make himself known; but he did not lightly expose the secrets of his existence. He was the idol of a poor mother, who had educated him by the endurance of stern privation. Mademoiselle Schinner, the daughter of an Alsatian

farmer, had never been married. Her tender heart had formerly been cruelly wounded by a wealthy man who did not pretend to any great delicacy in love-matters. On the day when, a young girl in all the brightness of her beauty, and all the pride of life, she gained, at the expense of her heart and all her beautiful illusions, that disenchantment which comes to us so slowly, yet all too soon (for we put off as long as possible our belief in misfortune, so that it always seems to have arrived too quickly), on that very day she went through a century of reflection, and took refuge in religion and in resignation. She refused the alms of the man who had deceived her, renounced the world, and made her shame her glory. She gave herself up entirely to maternal love, demanding from it all its delights in exchange for those social pleasures to which she was bidding adieu. She sup-

ported herself by work, laying up for herself a treasure in her boy. And so at length the day and hour arrived when he repaid her for all the long and lingering sacrifices of her indigence.

At the last exhibition her son had received the cross of the Legion of Honour. The newspapers which pronounced unanimously in favour of the unknown genius, were still ringing with sincere praise. The artists themselves hailed Schinner as a master, and the dealers covered his pictures with gold pieces. At twenty-five, Hippolyte Schinner, who had inherited his mother's woman's heart, had come to understand his position in the world better than he ever did. In his desire to afford his mother those enjoyments which society had withheld from her for so many years, he lived for her; hoping that, by dint of his fame and fortune, he might some day

see her happy, rich, respected, and the centre of a circle of celebrated men. With that view Schinner had chosen his friends from among the most honourable and distinguished men. Fastidious in the selection of his acquaintances, he wished still further to raise a position which his talent had already rendered so high. The toil to which he had been doomed from youth, by forcing him to remain in solitude—that mother of lofty thoughts—had preserved in him those beautiful beliefs which gild life's earliest years. His youthful mind was no stranger to any of the thousand delicacies which render a young man a being *sui generis*, a being whose heart teems with felicities, poetic dreams and virgin hopes, which, however feeble in the eyes of world-worn people, are still profound from their simplicity. Nature had endowed him with those gentle and polished manners which

go direct to the heart, and win even those who do not at all understand them. He was well formed. His voice, that seemed to come from the heart, inspired the hearts of others with noble feelings, and there was a certain candour in its accents which bespoke genuine modesty. Those who saw him felt themselves drawn towards him by some moral attraction which has fortunately escaped the analysis of men of science, who would resolve it into some phenomenon of galvanism, or into the play of some fluid or other, and would formulate our feelings by given proportions of oxygen and of electricity.

These details will perhaps explain to persons of a bold disposition, and to men who are overburdened with a sense of propriety, why Hippolyte Schinner did not take advantage of the absence of the porter (who had gone to the end of the Rue de la

Madeleine in search of a coach) to cross-examine the portress about the two strangers who had displayed so much kindness of heart on his behalf.

But although he, for his part, made answer yes and no simply, to the inquiries, (very natural under the circumstances,) which the woman addressed to him as to his accident, and the kind intervention of the fourth-floor lodgers, he could not prevent her yielding to the porters' instinct; and accordingly she began to talk to him about the two strangers, in a strain coloured by her peculiar politics and the subterraneous opinions of the porter's lodge.

"Ah!" she said, "it was Mademoiselle Leseigneur and her mother beyond a doubt; they have lived there for four years. We don't yet know what these two ladies do. In the morning, but only till twelve o'clock, an old charwoman, who is half deaf and as

dumb as a wall, comes to do for them. In the evening two or three old gentlemen who are decorated like you, sir, and one of whom has a carriage and servants, and they say he has 60,000 francs a year, come to visit them, and often stay very late.

“Moreover, they are very nice lodgers, like yourself, sir, and economical,—why, they live upon nothing—as soon as ever a letter arrives they pay the postage; it’s very funny, sir, the mother has not the same name as her daughter. Ah, when they go to the Tuileries, mademoiselle is very nicely dressed, and she never goes out without being followed by young men; but she shuts the door in their faces, and she is quite right, the landlord would not allow . . .”

But here the carriage drove up. Hippolyte did not stay to hear any more, but went home. His mother, to whom he related

what had happened, dressed the wound again, and would not let him go to his studio next day. A consultation having been held, various prescriptions were ordered, and Hippolyte remained at home for three days. During this seclusion his unemployed imagination brought before him vividly and in fragments the details of the scene which had followed his swoon. The profile of the young girl stood out clearly against the darkness of his mind's eye; he saw again the wan features of the mother, or felt once more the hands of Adelaide. A gesture which, when just seen, had made but little impression on him, but whose exquisite grace was thrown by memory into bold relief, reappeared before his mind. Then a particular posture, or the tones of a melodious voice, embellished by memory's distance, came back quite suddenly, like objects which, when plunged into the

depths of the water, return to the surface.

Thus, on the day on which he was able to resume his labours, he went back to his studio very early. But the visit which he had, incontestably, the right to pay to his neighbours, was the real cause of his eagerness ; he had already forgotten the pictures which he had begun. At the moment when a passion bursts from its swaddling clothes, it finds inexplicable sources of delight, which those who have loved will understand. Thus, certain persons will know why the painter mounted the staircase leading to the fourth story so slowly, and will be in the secret of the rapid pulsations of his heart at the moment when he caught sight of the brown door of the modest apartments inhabited by Mademoiselle Leseigneur. This girl, who did not bear her mother's name, had aroused a thousand

sympathetic feelings in the young painter; he wished to trace between her and himself certain similarities of position, and invested her with the misfortunes of his own origin. While at his work Hippolyte yielded himself up readily to dreams of love, and made a good deal of noise in order to compel the two ladies to think of him, just as he was thinking of Mademoiselle Leseigneur. He remained till late in his studio, dined there, and then towards seven o'clock went down to call upon his neighbours.

No painter of manners has ventured to introduce us into the really curious interiors of certain Parisian existences, into the secrets of those dwellings which pour forth such new and elegant toilettes and gaily attired women, who, in all outward seeming rich, exhibit throughout their abodes the symptoms of a precarious fortune.

If my picture be in this respect too freely

drawn, if the reader finds my account tedious, let him not find fault with the description, which forms an integral part of the story, so to speak ; since the aspect of the apartments occupied by his two neighbours had a great influence upon the feelings and the hopes of Hippolyte Schinner.

The house belonged to one of those landlords who have a pre-existing and a profound horror of repairs and decorations ; one of those men who look upon their position of Parisian landlords as a calling. In the long chain of moral species, these people occupy a middle position between the miser and the usurer. Optimists by reflection, they are all devoted to the *status quo* of Austria. If you talk to them about altering a cupboard or a door, or of opening the most necessary ventilator, their eyes flash, their bile begins to work, and they rear like frightened horses. Has the

wind blown down some of their chimney-pots ? they fall ill and cut off their visit to the Gymnase, or the Porte Saint-Martin, on account of the repairs. Hippolyte, who on account of some decorations which he wanted carried out in his studio, had been present at the gratuitous representation of a comic scene by M. Molineux, was not surprised at the thick black hues, the greasy tints, the blotches, and other disagreeable accessories which adorned the woodwork of the apartments. Such stigmata of poverty, moreover, are not altogether wanting in poetic charm to the eye of an artist.

Mademoiselle Leseigneur herself came to open the door. When she recognized the young painter, she bowed to him, and at the same moment, with truly Parisian dexterity and that presence of mind which pride confers, she turned to close the door of a glazed partition, through which Hip-

polyte might have caught a glimpse of some linen hanging on lines stretched over fuel-saving stoves; of an old folding bed, the charcoal, coal, irons, filter, crockery-ware, and all the utensils peculiar to small establishments. Muslin curtains, extremely neat, carefully concealed this *capharnaum* (such is the familiar name for laboratories of this description), which, moreover, was dimly lighted by windows looking into the neighbouring court. With the rapid all-embracing glance of an artist, Hippolyte saw at once the uses to which this first room, thus cut in two, was devoted; its furniture and its whole character and condition. The more honoured portion, which served at the same time as an ante-room, and a dining-room, was hung with an old rose-coloured paper, with a velvet border, which had doubtless been manufactured by Reveillon. The holes and

stains in it had been carefully concealed with wafers. Prints representing the battles of Alexander, by Lebrun, hung in their worn frames symmetrically upon the walls. In the middle of the room was an old-fashioned table of solid mahogany worn at the edges. A small stove, whose straight unjointed flue could scarcely be seen, stood before the hearth, which was blocked up by a chest of drawers. The chairs, in strange contrast with the rest of the room, showed some traces of former splendour; they were of carved mahogany, but the red morocco of the seats, the gilded nails and bindings, showed scars as numerous as those of the old serjeants of the Imperial Guard. The room formed a museum of certain objects that are to be met with only in amphibious establishments of this kind, nameless objects that are neither articles of luxury nor of poverty, but share the

character of both. Among other curiosities, Hippolyte observed a magnificently mounted telescope hanging over the little greenish glass which adorned the chimney-piece. To match this queer bit of furniture, there stood between the fireplace and the partition, a wretched side-board, painted to look like mahogany, the most difficult of all woods to imitate. But the red and slippery floor, the miserable little carpets placed in front of the chairs, the furniture, all exhibited that shining neatness which perpetual rubbing and dusting give to old-fashioned bits of furniture; conferring on them a false lustre, and giving prominence to their defects, antiquity, and long service.

An indefinable odour, the result of the exhalations of the *capharnaum*, mixed with the vapour of the dining-room, and of the staircase, pervaded the apartments,

although the window was open, and the air of the street shook the muslin curtains, which were carefully drawn so as to hide the embrasure on which previous lodgers had stamped their presence by divers incrustations—a species of domestic fresco.

Adelaide made haste to open the door of the second room, into which she ushered the artist with a certain amount of pleasure. Hippolyte, who had formerly seen in his mother's home the same signs of penury, observed them here with that keenness of impression which characterizes the first acquisitions of our memory, and entered more readily than any one else could have done into the details of this existence. But the excellent young man, when he recognized the objects which had surrounded him in childhood's days, felt no contempt for this hidden poverty, and no

pride in the luxury which he had won for his mother.

“Well, sir, I hope that you have quite got over the effects of your fall,” said the old mother, rising from an old-fashioned easy-chair at the corner of the fireplace, and giving him an arm-chair.

“Yes, madame, and I am come to thank you for the kind care you both bestowed upon me, and especially mademoiselle, who heard me fall.” As Hippolyte uttered this phrase, redolent of that admirable stupidity which the first agitations arising from true love give rise to, he looked at the young girl. Adelaide was lighting the double-ventilating lamp in order, doubtless, that she might put out of sight a candle stuck in a large flat-bottomed copper candlestick and festooned with some salient flutings, the result of an unusual amount of running. She made a slight bow, took the can-

dlestick into the anteroom, and returned to place the lamp upon the mantelpiece. Then she sat down beside her mother, a little in the rear of the artist, in order that she might have a good look at him, while all the time she seemed to be busily studying the début of the lamp, whose light, arrested by the moisture of a dirty glass, flickered as it struggled with a black and ill-trimmed wick. Catching sight of the large mirror upon the mantel-shelf, Hippolyte speedily fixed his eyes upon it in order to admire Adelaide. The girl's little manœuvre, therefore, served only to embarrass them both.

While Hippolyte chatted with Madame Leseigneur, for so he ventured to christen her, he examined the room—not pointedly but furtively. The Egyptian faces of the iron firedogs, barely peeped through the cinders which encumbered the grate, in

which two brands were trying to effect a junction in front of a sham log made of fire-clay, and buried as carefully as a miser's hoard. The old Aubusson carpet, much darned, faded, and thread-bare as a pensioner's coat, was not large enough to cover the whole floor, the chill of which made itself sensible to the feet. The walls were decorated with a reddish paper, representing a lampass material with yellow figures. In the middle of the wall opposite to the windows the painter saw a chink and the cracks in the paper produced by the double doors of an alcove which doubtlessly formed the sleeping-quarters of Madame Leseigneur, and was insufficiently concealed by a sofa placed in front of it. Fronting the fireplace, and over a mahogany commode whose ornamentation was not wanting either in richness or good taste, there hung the portrait of an officer of high rank.

The light was not good enough to enable the painter to see the portrait distinctly, but from what he could see he thought that the execrable daub must be a production of some Chinese artist. The red silk curtains and the red and yellow chair-covers of this room, “contrived a double debt to pay,” were alike discoloured. On the marble top of the commode was placed a valuable malachite tray, with a dozen coffee cups magnificently painted,—of Sèvres workmanship beyond a doubt. Upon the mantelshelf stood the inevitable *Empire* time-piece representing a warrior driving a four-horsed chariot, with the figures of the twelve hours, arranged upon the spokes of the wheel. The wax candles in the candelabra were yellow with smoke, and at each end of the chimney-piece, there was a porcelain vase crowned with artificial flowers full of dust and adorned with moss.

Hippolyte observed in the middle of the room a card-table ready for use, and some packs of new cards. To the eye of an observer there was something depressing in the sight of this penury, tricked out like an old woman who wants her face to lie. The spectacle presented was such as to induce any man of sense to propose to himself off-hand this dilemma:—"Either these two women are integrity personified, or they lead a life of intrigue and gambling." But on looking at Adelaide a young man so pure as Hippolyte Schinner was bound to credit them with the most perfect innocence and to ascribe the incongruities presented by the room to the most honourable causes.

"My girl," said the elder lady to the younger, "make up a little more fire, and give me my shawl."

Adelaide went into the drawing-room, in

which no doubt she slept, and returned bringing her mother a Cashmere shawl which, when new, must have been very valuable, for the designs were of Indian workmanship; but old, faded, and full of darns, it was in keeping with the furniture. Madame Leseigneur wrapped herself up in it very artistically and with all the skill of an old woman who wanted to be taken at her word.

The young girl ran lightly to the *cappharnaum*, and reappeared with a handful of small pieces of wood, which she courageously threw upon the sinking fire. It would be very difficult to transcribe the conversation which took place between these three people. Guided by that tact which the experience of early troubles rarely fails to confer, Hippolyte did not venture to indulge in the slightest remark relating to the position of his neighbours; having under his eyes the symptoms of a penury

so thinly veiled. The most ordinary question would have been indiscreet and could only be conceded to old-established friendship. Yet at the same time the artist was deeply absorbed by this poverty in disguise ; it wrung his generous heart ; but knowing that every kind of pity, even the most amiable, may be offensive, he felt ill at ease on account of the discordance between his thoughts and language. The two ladies began by talking about painting; for women well understand the embarrassment that underlies a first visit. They perhaps feel it ; and the character of their intellect supplies them with a thousand resources for putting an end to it. By questioning the young man about the material processes of his art and about his studies, Adelaide and her mother contrived to embolden him to talk. The indefinable trifles of which their friendly conversation consisted induced Hippolyte

quite naturally, to give vent to remarks and reflections which displayed the nature of his moral sentiments and the tone of his mind. Grief had prematurely withered the old lady's face, which had no doubt once been beautiful, though now all that remained to her were the striking features, the outlines, in one word the skeleton, of a countenance which displayed, as a whole, great refinement of intellect and much grace in the play of the eye. There, in the play of the eye, could be traced the expression peculiar to the ladies of the old French Court, an expression which cannot be defined. Those fine and subtle features might just as well be taken to denote bad sentiments and suggest the existence of female craft and cunning carried to a high pitch of perversity, as to indicate the delicacy of a lofty spirit. In fact the face of a woman embarrasses the ordinary observer, because the difference between

candour and duplicity, between the genius of intrigue and the genius of right feeling, cannot there be traced. He who is gifted with penetrating vision divines those subtle shades of difference arising from the less or greater curvature of a line, the less or greater depth of a dimple, the less or greater prominence of a projecting feature. The correct appreciation of such diagnostics is entirely within the province of intuition, which only can discover what all are concerned to hide. The physiognomy of the old lady resembled the room which she occupied in this respect—that it seemed equally hard to discover whether beneath this penury lurked vice or strict integrity as to find out whether Adelaide's mother was an old coquette accustomed to weigh, to calculate, and barter everything, or a loving woman full of noble and amiable qualities. But at Schinner's time of life

the heart's first impulse is to believe in the existence of good, and accordingly as he looked at the noble, almost disdainful, forehead of Adelaide, and beheld her eyes that were so full of mind and thought, he inhaled, so to speak, the suave and modest scent of virtue. In the midst of their talk he seized the opportunity of speaking of portraits in general, so as to acquire the right of examining the hideous pastil, all the tints of which had faded, while the greater part of the colour had come bodily away.

"You prize that painting, doubtless, on account of the likeness, ladies, for the drawing itself is horrible?" he said, looking at Adelaide.

"It was taken at Calcutta, in a great hurry," replied the mother with emotion.

She gazed at the ill-favoured sketch with that entire self-abandonment to which the memories of by-gone happiness give rise

when they awake and bathe the heart as with some beneficent dew, to the refreshing influence of which we delight to give way ; but there was also in the expression of the old lady's face, the trace of an enduring sorrow. So at least did the artist interpret the attitude and countenance of his neighbour. He thereupon went up to her and took a seat beside her. "Madame," he said, "a little time longer and the colours of this pastil will have completely disappeared. The portrait will then exist only in your memory ; where you will behold a face that is dear to you, others will not see anything at all. Will you permit me to transfer this likeness to canvas, where it will be more securely fixed than on this paper. Grant me, on the score of our neighbourhood, the pleasure of rendering you this service. There are hours during which an artist loves to repose from his compositions by under-

taking works of a less elevated character ; it will therefore be a diversion to me to reproduce this head."

The old lady trembled as she heard these words, and Adelaide cast at the painter one of those concentrated glances which seem like an emanation from the soul. Hippolyte wanted to be connected with his two neighbours by some link, and to acquire the right to take a share in their existence. His offer being addressed to the liveliest affections of the heart, was the only one which it was possible for him to make ; it satisfied his artist pride, and was in no way humiliating to the two ladies. Madame Leseigneur accepted his offer without expressing any enthusiasm or regret, but with the feeling of noble hearts who know the strength of the bonds created by such obligations, and whose acceptance of them is therefore a magnificent eulogy—a proof of esteem.

“It seems to me,” said the artist, “that the uniform is that of a naval officer.”

“Yes,” said the old lady, “it is the uniform of the captain of a ship. My husband, Mons. de Rouville, died in Batavia from the result of a wound received during an engagement with an English vessel which fell in with him on the coast of Asia. His vessel was a frigate of fifty-six guns, while the *Revenge* was a ship carrying ninety-six. The combat was very unequal, but he defended himself so bravely that the fight lasted till midnight, and he was able to get away. When I returned to France, Bonaparte was not yet paramount, and they refused me a pension. When latterly I applied for it again, the minister harshly told me that if the Baron de Rouville had *emigrated* I should not have lost him, and that he would be a rear-admiral; and finally his Excellency wound up by opposing my

claim with some law about forfeitures. I only took the step, urged to it by my friends, for poor Adelaide's sake. I always felt a sort of repugnance to making a sorrow which robs a woman of her voice and strength, the ground of an appeal for alms. I don't like this setting of a money value upon blood that has been irreparably spilled."

"Mother, this is a subject which always makes you ill." When Adelaide had said these words, Madame Leseigneur de Rouville bowed her head and was silent.

"I thought, sir," said the young lady to Hippolyte, "that an artist's work was as a rule very quiet?"

At this question Hippolyte blushed, remembering the noise he had made. Adelaide did not pursue the subject, and saved him the trouble of telling some fib, by suddenly rising as she heard the noise

of a carriage stopping at the door. She went into her own room, whence she returned carrying in her hand two large candlesticks furnished with wax-candles which had already done duty. These she speedily lighted, and then, without waiting for the tinkle of the bell, she opened the door of the anteroom, in which she left the lamp. The sound of a kiss given and returned went straight to the very heart of Hippolyte; but the young man's impatience to see who it was that treated Adelaide with such familiarity was not quickly satisfied. The new arrivals had a whispered conversation with Adelaide, which he thought very protracted. At length, Mademoiselle de Rouville reappeared, followed by two men whose dress, faces, and general appearance are a whole history in themselves. The first, who was about sixty years of age, wore one of those

coats which were invented, I believe, for Louis XVIII., who was then upon the throne; a kind of coat which offered a solution of the most difficult of all vestmental problems, that ought to have immortalized the tailor who discovered it. This genius understood for certain the art of transitions, which was the very spirit and essence of that epoch of political mobility. Is it not a very rare merit to be able to gauge the era in which we live? This coat, which the young men of this age may take for a fable, was neither a civil nor a military coat, and could pass in turn for a military or a civil coat. The flaps of the two hind tails were ornamented with embroidered *fleurs-de-lys*. The gilt buttons were also stamped with *fleurs-de-lys*. Upon the shoulders were two empty loops, awaiting their useless epaulettes. These two traces of martiality stood there like a petition without a

countersign. In the case of this old man the button-hole of this coat of royal blue blossomed with several ribands. It was clear that he always kept his three-cornered hat, with its golden string, in his hand; for the snowy *ailes de pigeon* of his powdered hair showed not a trace of the pressure of a hat. He did not *look* more than fifty, and seemed to enjoy robust health. While his physiognomy exhibited the frank and loyal character of the old *émigrés*, it also bespoke the light and easy morals, the gay amours, and the levity of those musketeers who were formerly so renowned in the *fasti* of gallantry. His gestures, his gait, and his manners all announced that he did not want to be cured either of his royalism, or of his religion, or of his amours.

A truly fantastic figure it was which followed this pretentious *Voltigeur de*

Louis XIV. (for such was the nickname given by the Bonapartists to these noble relics of the monarchy). But fairly to paint this second figure it should be made the principal object of the picture in which it is but an accessory. Imagine, then, a dry and wiry figure, dressed like that which has been first described, but being only its reflection, its shadow if you will. While the coat of the former was new, that of the latter was old and shabby. The powder in the hair of the second seemed less white, the gold of his lilies was less bright, his epaulette loops were more drooping and more shrivelled: his intellect was less keen, and his age more advanced than that of the other. In short he realized the saying of Rivarol about Champcenetz:—"He is my moonshine." He was but the other's double—a poor pale double, for there existed between them

all the difference that there is between the first and the last proof of an engraving. This mute old fellow was a mystery to the painter, and a mystery he always remained. The chevalier (for he was a chevalier) did not speak to any one and no one spoke to him. Was he a friend, a poor relation, a man who stuck to the old gallant as a humble companion sticks to an old woman?

Was he something between the dog, the parrot, and the friend? Had he saved the fortune, or merely the life of his benefactor? Was he the Trim of a second Captain Toby? Not only at the Baronne de Rouville's but elsewhere also he excited curiosity without ever satisfying it. Who, living under the Restoration, could possibly recall the attachment which before the Revolution bound this chevalier to his friend's wife, who had now been in her grave for twenty years?

The personage who seemed the more recent of these two relics advanced gallantly towards the Baronne de Rouville, kissed her hand, and sat down by her side. The other bowed and placed himself near to his type at a distance represented by the width of two chairs. Adelaide went and leaned her elbows upon the back of the armchair occupied by the old gentleman, unconsciously imitating the posture which Guérin in his celebrated picture has given to the sister of Dido. Although the familiarity of the old gentleman was that of a father, the liberties which he took seemed for the moment to displease the young lady.

“What, are you sulky with me?” said he.

Thereupon, he looked at Schinner with one of those oblique glances full of subtilty and insight which may be called diplomatic glances. Its expression showed the prudent uneasiness, the polished

curiosity, of well-bred people who at sight of a stranger seem to put the question, "Is he one of us?"

"This is our neighbour," said the old lady, pointing to Hippolyte. "The gentleman is a celebrated painter, whose name you must know in spite of your indifference in matters of art."

The gentleman observed his old friend's roguish omission of the name, and bowed to the young man.

"Certainly," he said, "I heard the gentleman's pictures much talked about at the last exhibition. Talent has glorious privileges, sir," he added, looking at the red riband of the artist. "The distinction which we purchase at the cost of our blood and long service, you obtain while still young; but all kinds of distinction are sisters," he continued, placing his hands upon his cross of St. Louis.

Hippolyte murmured a few words of thanks and again became silent, confining himself to admiring with growing enthusiasm the beautiful girlish head, which had bewitched him. He was very soon buried in this contemplation, and thought no more about the extreme poverty of the household. To him the face of Adelaide stood out in an atmosphere of light. He gave brief answers to the questions addressed to him, which he fortunately heard, thanks to a singular faculty of the mind, which enables us at times to divide the current of our thoughts. Has it not happened to every one of us to remain plunged in some sad or pleasurable meditation, to listen to its voice within ourselves, and at the same time, attend to a conversation or a reading? Admirable duality! how often does it enable us patiently to endure the bore!

Hope, fruitful and smiling, filled Hippolyte with a thousand thoughts of happiness, and he no longer cared to take notice of any of his surroundings. He was a child full of delight, and it seemed to him disgraceful to analyze pleasure.

After the lapse of a certain time, he perceived that the old lady and her daughter were playing cards with the old gentleman.

As for the satellite of the latter, he, faithful to his character of shadow, was standing behind his friend watching his game, and replying to the mute inquiries of the card-player by little grimaces of approval, which reflected the questioning movements of the other's face.

"Du Halga, I always lose," said the gentleman.

"You discard badly," replied the Baronne de Rouville.

“Why, for the last three months I have not been able to win a single game from you,” he continued.

“Have you the aces, Monsieur le Comte?” asked the old lady.

“Yes, that is another for me to mark,” he said.

“Shall I be your counsellor?” asked Adelaide.

“No, no, keep opposite to me. Zounds! it would be too hard to lose my money, *and* the sight of your face.”

At last the match came to an end. The gentleman took out his purse, and throwing two louis upon the cloth somewhat ill-temperedly, exclaimed,—

“Forty francs, as true as gold. And, what the deuce! It’s eleven o’clock.”

“It’s eleven o’clock,” repeated the mute looking at the artist.

The young man hearing this phrase a little

more distinctly than all the others, came to the conclusion that it was time to go. Returning, therefore, to this lower world of vulgar ideas, he stumbled on some commonplaces for the sake of saying something, bowed to the baroness, her daughter, the two strangers, and quitted the apartments under the influence of the maiden joys of genuine love; nor did he seek to analyze the little events of the evening.

The next day the young artist felt the keenest possible desire to see Adelaide again. If he had listened to the voice of passion he would have invaded his neighbours at six o'clock in the morning, as soon as he reached his studio. He had, however, still sufficient reason left to wait till the afternoon. But so soon as he thought he could in decency present himself before Madame de Rouville, he went down, and while his heart beat loudly,

rang the bell. The door was opened by Mademoiselle Leseigneur, and Hippolyte, blushing like a young girl, timidly asked for the portrait of the Baron de Rouville.

“Oh, come in,” said Adelaide, who no doubt had heard him coming down from his studio.

Bashful and out of countenance, so stupid with happiness that he knew not what to say, the artist followed her. To see Adelaide, to hear the rustle of her dress after having spent the livelong morning in wishing to be near her, after having risen from his seat a hundred times saying, “now I am going down,” and then not going down; this to him was life, and life so abounding that such sensations long protracted would have worn his very soul. The heart possesses the singular power of giving an extraordinary value to the merest trifles. What a joy it is for a traveller to

gather a blade of grass, an unfamiliar leaf, if he has risked his life in pursuit of them. Thus it is with love's trifles. The old lady was not in the reception-room. When the young girl found herself there alone with the painter, she brought forward a chair in order to reach the portrait, but finding that she could not unhook it without placing her foot upon the commode, she turned to Hippolyte, and blushing said to him, "I am not tall enough. Will you take it down?"

It was a feeling of modesty, traceable in the expression of her features and in the tones of her voice, that was the real motive of her request; and the young man, understanding this, threw her one of those intelligent looks which are love's sweetest language. Seeing that the artist had guessed her feelings, Adelaide dropped her eyes proudly, in a manner the secret of

which only maidens possess. Finding not a word to say for himself and feeling almost intimidated, the artist took the picture down, examined it carefully, setting it in a proper light near the window, and went away, simply saying to Mademoiselle Leseigneur, "I will return it to you soon."

During this brief moment both of them felt one of those keen emotions whose effects upon the mind may be compared to the effects produced by a stone thrown into a lake. The sweetest reflections spring up and succeed one another, indefinite, numerous, vague, agitating the heart, just as the rippling circles, starting from the spot where the stone was thrown in, long continue to furrow the surface of the water.

Armed with the portrait, Hippolyte returned to his studio. His easel had already been fitted with a canvas, his palette charged

with colours, his brushes cleansed, and the place and light in which he was to work, fixed. So until dinner-time he laboured away at the portrait with that ardour which artists devote to their whims. That very evening he returned to the Baroness de Rouville's and remained there from nine o'clock until eleven. Barring the different topics of conversation, this evening bore a close resemblance to the preceding. The two old gentlemen came at the same time, the same match at piquet took place, the same phrases fell from the lips of the players, the sum lost by Adelaide's friend was about as large as that which he had lost the night before. Only Hippolyte, who had gained a little confidence, ventured to chat with the young lady.

Thus eight days glided away. Meanwhile the feelings of the artist and Adelaide underwent those slow and exquisite trans-

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formations whereby two hearts are brought into complete unison. Thus day by day the look with which Adelaide greeted her friend became more intimate, more confiding, more gay and frank. Her voice and manners became more affectionate and familiar. They laughed and talked, communicated their thoughts to each other, and spoke about themselves with all the simplicity of two children who have contrived in the space of a single day to know each other as if they had been acquainted for three years. Schinner wanted to learn piquet. Being quite ignorant of the game, he naturally committed blunder after blunder, and, like the old gentleman, lost nearly every match. Without having yet told their love, the two young people knew that they belonged to each other. Hippolyte took a delight in exercising his power over the timid girl. Many were the con-

cessions made by Adelaide, who in her timidity and devotion was the dupe of those mock fits of coldness which the least skilful lover and the most simple-minded young girl will plan and constantly employ, just as spoiled children abuse the power with which a mother's love invests them. Accordingly all familiarity between the old count and Adelaide promptly ceased. The young girl correctly interpreted the melancholy fits of the young painter, the thoughts that underlay his knitted brow and breathed in the brusque accent of the few words he uttered when the old gentleman freely kissed Adelaide on neck or hand. She, on her part, too, soon began to ask her lover for a strict account of his slightest actions; she was so uneasy, so unhappy, when Hippolyte did not come to see them, and scolded him so soundly when he absented himself, that he was obliged to

give up seeing his friends and relinquished general society altogether. Adelaide betrayed the jealousy which is innate in women, on finding that sometimes after leaving Madame de Rouville's at eleven o'clock the artist would pay visits elsewhere and saunter through the gayest drawing-rooms in Paris. She told him that a life of that kind was injurious to the health ; then, with that intense earnestness which gains so much power from the voice, the gestures, and the look of the beloved one, she maintained that " a man who was obliged to squander on several women at once, his leisure time and the graces of his intellect could not be the object of a very strong affection."

Thus the artist was led, as much by the despotism of passion as by the instances of a loving girl, to confine his existence to the small apartment where everything was

to his mind. In short, never was love more ardent or more pure. The faith and delicacy, which existed equally between them, nurtured their mutual passion, without the aid of those sacrifices by which many persons seek to prove to each other their affection. There existed between them a constant interchange of feelings so sweet that they did not know which of the two gave or received the most. A spontaneous inclination rendered the union of their hearts always very close. The progress of this genuine affection was so rapid that two months after the accident to which the artist owed the happiness of knowing Adelaide, their lives had become one life. From early morning the young girl hearing some one walking overhead could say to herself, "There he is." When Hippolyte went home to dine at his mother's he never failed to look in and say "How do you do"

to his neighbours, and in the evening he would come at the accustomed hour with all a lover's punctuality; so that no woman, not even the most tyrannical and the most ambitious in matters of love, could have brought the slightest reproach against the young painter. Thus Adelaide experienced the unmixed and boundless happiness of seeing the complete realization of that ideal which at her time of life it is so natural to dream of. The old gentleman did not come so often, the jealous Hippolyte had supplanted him in the evening at the green table and in his constant losses.

Yet in the midst of his happiness he was beset by one importunate idea, when he bethought him of the unfortunate circumstances of Madame de Rouville, for he had acquired more than one proof of her distress. Several times already he had

said to himself on his way home, "What, twenty francs every evening?" and he did not dare to avow even to himself the odious suspicion.

It took him two months to paint the likeness, and when it was finished, varnished, and framed, he considered it one of his best works. Madame de Rouville had said nothing further to him about it. Was this carelessness or pride? The artist did not care to fathom the motives of her silence. He entered gaily into a little plot with Adelaide, to put the portrait in its place while Madame de Rouville should be away. So one day during her mother's customary walk at the Tuileries, Adelaide went up alone for the first time to Hippolyte's studio, under pretence of seeing the portrait in the favourable light in which it had been painted. She stood there mute and motionless, lost in a delightful reverie

wherein all the feelings of a woman blended in one—for are they not all summed up in boundless admiration for the man she loves? When the artist, uneasy at her silence, bent down to look at the young girl she held out her hand to him without being able to utter a single word, but two tears fell from her eyes. Hippolyte seized her hand, and for a moment they looked at each other in silence, both wishing, but fearing, to confess their love. The artist held Adelaide's hand in both of his, and the equal warmth and equal movement told the lovers that their hearts beat with an equal force. Overcome with emotion the young girl drew herself gently away from Hippolyte and said with a look full of simplicity, "You will make my mother very happy."

"Only your mother?" he inquired.

"Oh, as for me, I am too happy already."

The artist bent his head and was silent, alarmed at the violence of the feelings which Adelaide's tone had awakened in his heart. Fully understanding the danger of the situation, they went down and put the portrait in its place. That day Hippolyte dined for the first time with the baroness, who, in the fulness of her heart, and bathed in tears, wanted to embrace him.

In the evening the old *émigré*, the ancient comrade of Baron de Rouville, paid his two friends a visit, to inform them that he had just been appointed a vice-admiral. His land-voyages across Germany and Russia had been reckoned as naval campaigns. When he caught sight of the portrait he cordially grasped the hand of the painter, and exclaimed, "Upon my honour, although my old carcase is hardly worth the trouble of perpetuating, I would gladly give 500 pistoles for so close a

likeness of myself as this is of my old friend Rouville."

At this suggestion the baroness looked at her old friend and smiled, while her face showed signs of rising gratitude. Hippolyte fancied that the old man's intention was to offer him the price of the two portraits in paying for his own; not only his artist's pride, but his jealousy also, was aroused by this reflection, and he replied, "Sir, if I painted portraits I should not have painted that."

The admiral bit his lips and sat down at the card-table. The artist remained near Adelaide, who suggested six games at piquet, which he accepted. While he was playing he noticed in Madame Rouville an eagerness over the game which surprised him. Never had the old baroness exhibited so earnest a desire to win, nor so keen a pleasure in handling the gentleman's gold.

During the evening Hippolyte's happiness was invaded by suspicions of evil which caused him much uneasiness. Did Madame de Rouville live by gambling? Perhaps she was playing at that moment, with a view to the payment of some debt, or spurred by some pressing need. Her rent might be unpaid, perhaps. The old man seemed sharp enough not to allow himself to be robbed of his money. What, then, was the inducement which drew him, rich as he was, to that abode of poverty? Why had he, who had formerly been so free with Adelaide, abandoned the footing of familiarity on which he had stood, and which was perhaps his by right?

These involuntary reflections impelled him to scrutinize the old man and the baroness, whose knowing look and certain sidelong glances which she cast at Adelaide and himself, disturbed him. "Can

they be deceiving me?" Such was Hippolyte's last, horrible, withering thought, which had precisely enough hold upon him to torture him. He resolved to remain, after the two old men had gone, in order to confirm or to dissipate his suspicions. On taking out his purse to pay Adelaide, he was so carried away by his harrowing thoughts, that he put it down upon the table, and fell into a brief reverie. Then, ashamed of being silent, he rose, replied to some commonplace inquiry from Madame Rouville, and went close to her, in order that he might more closely examine her aged features, while he talked. When he left, he was under the influence of a thousand conflicting ideas. After he had descended a few of the steps he went back for the purse which he had forgotten.

"I left my purse with you," he said, to the young girl.

“No,” she replied, blushing.

“I certainly thought it was there,” said he, pointing to the card-table.

Ashamed, for Adelaide’s sake, and that of the baroness, at not seeing it, he looked at them with a stupified look which made them laugh, turned pale, and then, tapping his waistcoat, resumed, “I am mistaken, no doubt I have it.”

In one end of the purse there had been fifteen louis, and in the other some small change. The theft was so flagrant, and was repudiated with such effrontery, that Hippolyte had no further doubts as to the morality of his neighbours. He stood still upon the staircase, then descended it with difficulty ; his legs trembled, he felt giddy, sweated, shivered, and found himself unable to walk ; so completely was he overcome by the fearful emotion caused by the overthrow of all his hopes. From that

moment his memory brought back to him a crowd of observations, trifling in appearance, but corroborative of his frightful suspicions, and decisive of the character and mode of life of these two women, since they established the reality of this last incident.

Had they, then, awaited the completion of the portrait, before stealing the purse? As the result of a conspiracy the robbery seemed more odious still. The artist remembered, to his sorrow, that for the last two or three evenings Adelaide had seemed to examine with all a young girl's inquisitiveness, the network of worn silk, while she was, probably, ascertaining how much the purse contained; and that she had indulged in some jokes, to all appearance perfectly innocent, but whose real object was, no doubt, to cover her look-out for the moment when the sum should be large enough to be worth stealing.

“The old admiral,” thought Hippolyte, “has perhaps some excellent reasons for not marrying Adelaide, and so the baroness thought she would try to inveigle—”

But at this hypothesis he stopped short without even finishing his thought, which was destroyed by one very just reflection :

“If the baroness wanted me to marry her daughter, they would not have robbed me.” Then, in order that he might retain his illusions and the love which had become so firmly rooted in his heart, he looked to chance for a favourable interpretation. “My purse may have fallen on to the floor,” he argued with himself; “it may have stuck on my armchair. Perhaps I have it on me, I am so absent-minded.” Then he rummaged his pockets with feverish movements; but the accursed purse was not forthcoming. Then his

cruel memory brought back to him, from time to time, the fatal truth. He distinctly saw his purse lying on the cloth; but though he no longer doubted that the robbery had been committed, he now framed excuses for Adelaide, saying that one ought not to condemn the unfortunate so hastily. There must be some secret explanation of this deed, which was, in outward seeming, so degrading. He could not bear to think that that proud and noble countenance was—a lie. But, now the poverty-stricken apartments appeared before him, shorn of all the poetry of that love which beautifies everything. Faded and squalid they rose before him, and he regarded them as the outward covering of an inner life that was ignoble, idle, vicious. For are not our feelings written on the things by which we are surrounded?

The next morning he rose without hav-

ing slept. Sorrow of heart, that serious moral malady, had made rapid progress in him. To lose a joy that has formed the subject of our dreams, to renounce a whole future, is anguish more acute than that caused by the destruction of happiness, however great, that has been actually enjoyed; for is not hope better than recollection? The reflections which suddenly arise out of such ruin are like a shoreless sea; we may for a time swim upon its bosom, but in the end our love must drown and perish. And it is a fearful death; for the feelings are the brightest portion of our existence. This partial death produces in certain organizations, whether they be strong or delicate, fearful havoc, the offspring of disenchantment, of defeated hope and cheated passion. Thus was it with the young artist. Early in the morning he went out to take a walk under the

fresh foliage of the gardens of the Tuileries. There, engrossed in thought and oblivious of all the world contained, he stumbled on one of his most intimate friends, an old comrade at school and in the studio, with whom he had lived on a footing of more than fraternal affection.

“Why, Hippolyte, what is the matter with you?” said his friend, François Souchet, a young sculptor, who had just gained the grand prize, and was on the wing for Italy.

“I am most unhappy,” said Hippolyte gravely.

“It can only be a love-affair that can cause you any trouble. As for money, fame, and social esteem—you have them all.”

Thereupon the confidences gradually commenced, and the artist confessed his passion. As soon as he began to talk

about the Rue de Suresnes, and of a young woman who lived upon a fourth storey, Souchet gaily exclaimed,—

“Stop one moment ; you are speaking of a little girl whom I go to the church of the Assumption every morning to see, and to whom I am making advances. Why, my dear fellow, we all know her. Her mother is a baroness. Do you believe in baronesses who live upon fourth storeys ? Brrr— Why you are a man of the golden age. We see the old mother here, in this walk, every day ; why, she has a face and a way of carrying herself that betray everything. What, haven’t you discovered what she is, from the way in which she carries her bag ? ”

The two friends walked together for a long time, and several young men, who knew Souchet or Schinner, joined them. The sculptor, who attached no great im-

portance to his friend's adventure, related it to the rest.

"Our friend also," said he, "has seen the little girl."

Then there followed observations, laughter, harmless jokes, full of the gaiety habitual to artists, which inflicted terrible agonies upon Hippolyte. A certain ingrained modesty rendered him ill at ease when he saw his heart's secret thus lightly treated, his passion torn to rags and tatters, and an unknown girl, whose life appeared so modest, subjected to judgments, true or false, pronounced with so much indifference.

"But, my dear friend," said Souchet, "have you seen the baroness's shawl?"

"Have you followed the little girl when she trots to the Assumption in the morning?" asked Joseph Bridau, a young tyro from the studio of Gros.

“Yes, the mother possesses, among other virtues, a certain grey dress, which I regard as typical,” said Bixiou, the caricaturist.

“Listen to me, Hippolyte,” pursued the sculptor, “come here about four o’clock and analyze the walk of the mother and daughter a little. If, after that, you retain any doubts, why, we shall never make anything of you; you will be capable of marrying the daughter of your porteress.”

Torn by the most conflicting feelings, the painter quitted his friends. It seemed to him that Adelaide and her mother must be above such accusations, and he felt remorse in the depths of his heart for having had any doubts about the purity of this young girl, who was so beautiful and simple. He went to his studio, passed the door of the rooms where Adelaide was, and felt in his heart a pang such as no

man can fail to understand. He loved Mademoiselle de Rouville so passionately, that in spite of the stolen purse he adored her still. His love was that of the Chevalier des Grieux, admiring and purifying his mistress even when she was in the van that was carrying the abandoned women to jail. "Why should not my love make her the purest of women? Why leave her to vice and evil without extending to her a friendly hand?" Such a mission pleased him. Love turns everything to its own account. Nothing is so seductive to a young man as to play the part of good genius to a woman.

There is a vague romance about such an enterprise which suits exalted minds. Is it not the most unlimited devotion in its highest and most graceful form? Is there not a certain grandeur in the thought that one loves so well as to love even under cir-

cumstances which kill the love of others? Hippolyte sat down in his studio and looked at his picture without doing anything to it. He saw the figures in it only through the tears which stood in his eyes; then with his brush still in his hand, he went up to the picture as if to tone down one of its tints, but did not touch it. Night came and found him still in the same attitude.

Roused from his reverie by the increasing darkness, he went down stairs, met the old admiral on the staircase, darted one sombre glance at him, and rushed away. It had been his intention to pay his neighbours a visit, but the sight of Adelaide's protector froze his heart and banished his resolution. He asked himself, for the hundredth time, what motive could induce the successful old *roué*, who had an income of 80,000 francs, to visit this fourth floor lodging, where he lost about forty francs

every evening. He believed he knew the motive. The next day and the succeeding days, Hippolyte plunged into work, in the endeavour to combat his passion by the seductive strength of ideas and the fire of conception. He half succeeded. Study comforted him, but it could not drown the recollection of so many happy hours passed by the side of Adelaide. One evening, on leaving his studio, he saw the door of the ladies' lodging half open. Some one was standing in the embrasure of the window. The arrangement of the door and staircase was such that the painter could not pass without seeing Adelaide. He bowed to her distantly, and cast at her a glance of complete indifference; but, judging of the young girl's sufferings by his own, he felt an internal tremor, as he thought of the bitterness which that look and that cold greeting might infuse into a loving heart.

To crown the sweetest festivals that ever made the happiness of two pure hearts, with eight days of neglect and with the deepest and most thorough scorn—was not that a hideous *dénouement* ! Perhaps the purse had been recovered ; perhaps every evening Adelaide had been looking for her friend's arrival. This very natural and simple thought filled the lover with fresh remorse. He asked himself whether the proofs of attachment which the young girl had afforded him, and their enchanting little talks, instinct with the love which had bewitched him, did not at least demand that he should make some inquiry and give a chance for some justification. Ashamed of having resisted for a whole week the wishes of his heart, and looking on himself as almost a criminal for having combated them, he went that very evening to Madame Rouville's. At sight of the young girl's

pale thin face, all his suspicions and evil thoughts took flight.

“Good God, what is the matter with you?” he asked, after having paid his respects to the baroness.

Adelaide made no reply, but looked at him with a melancholy, wan, dejected look, which pained him.

“You have doubtless been very hard at work,” said the old lady; “you are changed. We are the cause of your seclusion. That portrait has thrown you back with some pictures of importance to your reputation.”

Hippolyte was glad to find so good an excuse for his want of attention.

“Yes,” he said, “I have been very busy, but I have suffered—”

At these words Adelaide raised her head and looked at her lover. Her anxious eyes had no reproach in them.

“You must have supposed, then, that we were very indifferent as to your good or evil fortune,” said the old lady.

“I was wrong,” he continued. “But nevertheless, there are troubles which we cannot confide to any one, not even to friends of older standing than I have the honour to possess in you.”

“The sincerity and strength of friendship cannot be gauged by the duration of time. I have seen very old friends bestow not a tear upon each other’s misfortunes,” said the baroness nodding her head.

“But what is the matter with you?” said the young man, addressing himself to Adelaide.

“Oh, nothing,” replied the baroness, “Adelaide has sat up for several nights in order to finish a bit of feminine handicraft, and would not listen to me when I told her

that a day sooner or later was of little consequence”

Hippolyte did not listen any further. As he looked at those two calm and noble faces, he blushed at his suspicions, and attributed the loss of his purse to some unknown chance. That evening was delightful to him and perhaps also to her. There are certain secrets which young hearts understand so well !

Adelaide guessed what was passing in Hippolyte's mind.

Without wishing to avow his fault, the artist recognized it ; he returned to his mistress more loving, more affectionate than before, and thus endeavoured to purchase an unspoken pardon.

Adelaide now experienced joy so perfect and so sweet that it did not seem too dearly bought by all the misfortune which had so cruelly disturbed her mind. But this

concord of their hearts, this magic unison, was nevertheless disturbed by a few words from the Baroness de Rouville.

“Are we going to have our little card-party?” said she, “for my old Kergarouët is relentless.”

This phrase reawakened all the young painter’s fears. He coloured as he looked at Adelaide’s mother, but he saw nothing in her features save an expression of frank good-nature; there was no *arrière-pensée* to destroy its charm, no trace of bad faith in its intelligence; the mischief that played in it was a gentle mischief, there was not a trace of remorse to disturb its calm.

He proceeded to take his seat at the table. Adelaide resolved to share his luck, pretending that he did not understand piquet, and required a partner. While the game went on Madame de Rouville and her daughter exchanged signs of intelligence

which caused Hippolyte all the more uneasiness in that he was winning; but at the end of the match a final stroke made the lovers debtors to the baroness. The artist had no sooner removed his hands from the table in order to search in his pocket for some silver, than he saw before him a purse which Adelaide had slipped there unperceived. The poor girl was holding the old purse in her hand, and for the sake of keeping her countenance, was looking in it for some money to pay her mother with. All the blood in Hippolyte's body rushed to his heart so swiftly that he almost fainted. The new purse which had been substituted for the old one, and contained his fifteen louis was worked with gold beads. Rings, tassels, and all bore witness to the good taste of Adelaide, who had doubtlessly exhausted her pocket-money in buying the ornaments which decked

her pretty piece of work. It was impossible to express with greater subtlety the feeling that the gift of the portrait could be acknowledged only by some token of regard. When Hippolyte, overwhelmed with joy, turned his eyes towards Adelaide and the baroness, he saw them trembling with delight, and rejoicing in their amiable fraud. He considered himself petty, mean, and stupid; he could have wished to punish himself, to tear his heart out. Tears rushed to his eyes; impelled by some irresistible force, he rose, he took Adelaide in his arms, strained her to his heart, and snatched a kiss from her : then, with all an artist's straightforwardness, he turned to the baroness, and exclaimed, "I claim her from you for my wife."

Adelaide looked at the painter half-indignantly, and Madame de Rouville, somewhat astonished, was seeking for a reply,

when the scene was interrupted by the ringing of the bell. The old vice-admiral appeared, followed by his *shadow* and Madame Schinner. Having guessed the origin of the grief which her son vainly attempted to conceal from her, Hippolyte's mother had gathered, from some of her friends, certain information about Adelaide. Justly alarmed at the calumnies which, unknown to the Comte de Kergarouët, attached to the young lady, Madame Schinner learned the count's name from the porteress, and went and told him what she had heard. He, in his wrath, would have liked "to cut the scoundrels' ears off," as he phrased it. Fired by his indignation, the admiral had told Madame Schinner the secret of his voluntary losses at the card-table—the pride of the baroness leaving him no other than his ingenious method of helping her.

When Madame Schinner had paid her respects to the baroness, the latter, looking at the Comte de Kergarouët, the Chevalier du Halga (the former friend of the late Comtesse de Kergarouët), Hippolyte, and Adelaide, said with that grace which has its source in a good heart, "It seems that we are quite a family party this evening."

LE BAL DE SCEAUX.

TO HENRI DE BALZAC.

HIS BROTHER, HONORÉ.

THE Count de Fontaine, the head of one of the most ancient families of Le Poitou, had devoted himself to the cause of the Bourbons with intelligence and courage during the war which the inhabitants of La Vendée carried on against the Republic. After having escaped all the dangers which threatened the royalist leaders during that stormy period of contemporary history, he used jokingly to say, "I am one of those who were killed upon the steps of the throne."

This witticism was not without some

foundation in fact, in the case of a man who had been left for dead on the bloody field of Quatre-Chemins.

Although the faithful Vendean had been ruined by the confiscations which took place, he continually refused the lucrative posts offered to him by the Emperor Napoleon. Staunch in his aristocratic convictions, he had blindly followed the maxims of his creed in the choice of a mate. In spite of the seductions to which he was exposed by a wealthy parvenu of the revolution, who set a high value on an alliance with him, the Count de Fontaine married a De Kergaroët, a young lady without fortune, but belonging to one of the best families in Brittany. When overtaken by the revolution, Monsieur de Fontaine had a numerous family. Although it did not accord with the ideas of this generous nobleman to solicit favours, he

yielded to his wife's desires, left his estate, (the rents of which were hardly sufficient to supply the wants of his children) and came to Paris. Grieved at the avidity with which his ancient comrades hunted after the posts and dignities at the disposal of the constitutional government, he was on the point of returning to his estate, when he received an official communication from a well-known minister, announcing his nomination to the grade of camp-marshal, in pursuance of the ordinance which gave permission to the officers of the catholic armies to reckon the first twenty years of the reign of Louis XVIII. as years of service. Some days later the Vendean also received, without any solicitation on his part, and *officially*, the cross of the order of the Legion of Honour and the cross of St. Louis.

Shaken in his resolution by these suc-

cessive marks of favour, for which he considered himself indebted to the memory of his sovereign, he no longer confined himself to conducting his family, as he had been wont to do, Sunday after Sunday, to the Salle des Maréchaux at the Tuileries, to cry *Vive le Roi* as the princes went to chapel; he requested the favour of a private audience. This audience, which was very readily obtained, had nothing *private* about it whatever. The royal reception-room was crammed with old servitors, whose powdered heads, seen from a certain elevation, looked like a carpet of snow. There the nobleman renewed his acquaintance with some of his old companions, who received him somewhat coldly; but the princes were *adorable*, to use the enthusiastic expression which escaped him when the most gracious of his masters, who, the count imagined, knew him only by name,

came up and shook him by the hand, calling him the purest of the Vendéans.

In spite of this ovation, however, it did not occur to any of these august personages to ask him for an account of his losses, or of the money which he had so generously poured into the coffers of the catholic army. He discovered, somewhat late, that he had fought at his own expense. Towards the conclusion of the evening, he thought he might venture to make a witty allusion to the condition of his finances, which was very similar to that of many another nobleman. His Majesty began to laugh very heartily, for he took a pleasure in any well-turned phrase, but he nevertheless replied by one of those royal pleasantries whose mildness is more formidable than an angry reprimand. One of the most intimate confidants of the king very soon drew near to the calculating Vendean,

and in a well-turned and polished phrase, gave him to understand, that it was premature for him to come to a reckoning with his masters ; that accounts of much older standing were under consideration, accounts which would doubtless furnish matter for a history of the revolution. The count beat a prudent retreat from the venerable group, which described a respectful semicircle in front of the august family ; then, after having, not without some difficulty, disengaged his sword from the attenuated shanks among which it was entangled, he crossed the court of the Tuileries on foot and regained the hackney-coach which he had left upon the quay. Endowed with that stubborn spirit which characterizes the old nobility, who still retain a recollection of the League and the Barricades, he complained to himself in the hackney-coach loudly, and in a manner

that might have compromised him, about the change that had taken place at court. "Formerly," said he to himself, "every one used to speak freely about his little private affairs to the king; noblemen did not hesitate to ask him for favours and for money, and now to-day there is a difficulty in obtaining repayment of sums disbursed in the king's service. Zounds! the cross of St. Louis and the rank of camp-marshal are not worth the three hundred thousand francs which I put down in good hard cash in the royal service. I shall speak to the king to his face in his own apartment."

The scene that had taken place cooled the zeal of M. de Fontaine all the more, in that his applications for an audience always remained unanswered. He saw, moreover, the upstarts of the empire obtaining some of those posts which under the ancient

monarchy had been set apart for the best families.

“All is lost,” said he one morning. “It is clear that the king was never anything but a revolutionist. If it were not for the king’s brother, who does not throw over old customs, and consoles his faithful servants, I know not into what hands the sceptre of France might pass, if this *régime* should continue. Their damned constitutional system is the worst of all forms of government, and will never suit France. Louis XVIII. and M. Beugnot spoiled everything at Saint Ouen.”

The count abandoned himself to despair and prepared to return to his estate, with the noble determination to waive all claim to indemnity. Just at that time the events of March 20, 1815, showed that a fresh storm was brewing, which threatened to engulf the legitimate sovereign and his defenders.

Monsieur de Fontaine acted like those generous people who will not send away a servant while it rains. He mortgaged his property to follow the routed monarchy, without knowing whether this partaking in the emigration would be more propitious to him than his former self-sacrifice. But since he had noticed that the companions of the sovereign's exile were held in more favour than the brave men who had formerly protested against the establishment of the Republic with arms in their hands, it may be that M. de Fontaine hoped to find his sojourn in a foreign land more profitable than active and dangerous service at home. The calculations of the courtier were not like those idle enterprises which on paper promise superb results, and ruin those who attempt the execution of them. He therefore was, in the witty language of the most brilliant and most skilful of our

diplomatists, one of the five hundred faithful servants who shared the exile of the Court at Ghent, and one of the fifty thousand who returned from it. During this short absence of royalty, M. de Fontaine had the good fortune to be employed by Louis XVIII., and found more than one opportunity for affording the king proofs of great political integrity and sincere attachment. One evening when the monarch had nothing better to do, he called to mind the *bon-mot* which Monsieur de Fontaine had indulged in at the Tuileries. The old Vendean did not permit so favourable an opportunity to remain unimproved, and told his story with so much wit that the king, whose memory was most tenacious, called it to mind as occasion served. The august man of letters observed the happy turn given to certain memoranda, the editing of which had been entrusted to the

discreet nobleman. This little merit caused Monsieur de Fontaine to be engraved in the king's memory as one of the most loyal servants of the crown. On the second return of the Bourbons, the count was one of the envoys extraordinary who were commissioned to travel through the departments, and summarily judge the fomentors of the rebellion; but he exercised his terrible powers with moderation. As soon as this temporary jurisdiction had come to an end, the grand provost took his seat among the Councillors of State, was elected deputy, spoke little, listened a great deal, and considerably altered his political views. Certain circumstances, of which biography knows nothing, made him so intimate with the king, that one day, on seeing him come in, the crafty monarch called out to him, "Friend Fontaine, I shall not take it into my head to make

you a director-general or a minister. Both you and I, if we were government clerks, should lose our places on account of our opinions."

"It may be said in favour of representative government, that it saves us the trouble formerly imposed on us of dismissing in person our secretaries of state. Our council is a regular hotel to which public opinion very often sends strange travellers; but nevertheless we shall always be able to find a place for our faithful servants." This ironical exordium was followed by an ordinance giving to M. de Fontaine an office attached to the crown demesne extraordinary. In consequence of the intelligent attention with which he listened to the sarcasms of his royal friend, his name was found on his Majesty's lips whenever a commission was to be appointed the members of which were to be well

paid. He had the good sense to say nothing about the favour with which the king regarded him, and managed to cultivate it by the piquant manner in which, during the course of one of those familiar chats in which Louis XVIII. took as much delight as in well-turned notes, he related the political anecdotes and, if the expression may be allowed to pass, the *cancans*, diplomatic or parliamentary, which, at that time, were so rife. It is well known that the details of his *governmentability*, a word adopted by the august jeerer, afforded him infinite amusement. Thanks to the good sense, the intelligence, and the skill of Monsieur de Fontaine, every member of his numerous family, no matter how young, ended as the count jocularly expressed it to his master, by settling himself on the leaves of the budget like a silkworm. Thus the eldest son, through the

king's favour, obtained an eminent position among the permanent judges ; the second, who was a simple captain before the Restoration, obtained a company immediately after his return from Ghent. Then, under cover of the excitement of the year 1815, during which regulations were set at naught, he was appointed to the Royal Guard, then again to the Body Guard, and ultimately found himself, after the affair of the Trocadéro, a lieutenant-general with a command in the Guard. The youngest son, who was originally appointed sub-prefect, very shortly became Master of the Requests and director of a municipal administration of the city of Paris, a post in which he was not exposed to the tempests which affected the legislature. These quiet favours, which were as secret as those conferred upon the count himself, were showered down unperceived. Although

the father and his three sons had, each of them, enough sinecures to produce a revenue almost as considerable as that of a director-general, their political emoluments excited the envy of no one. In these early days of the constitutional system, few persons had accurate notions about the peaceful regions of the budget, in which skilful favourites managed to find equivalents for the abbeys which had been swept away. Monsieur de Fontaine, who used formerly to boast that he had not read the *Charte*, and displayed so much indignation at the greed of the courtiers, hastened to prove to his august master that he understood as well as that master, the spirit and the resources of representative government. However, notwithstanding the stability of the careers in which his three sons had been launched, and the pecuniary advantages arising from the

simultaneous tenure of four offices, M. de Fontaine's family was too numerous to allow him to re-establish his fortune with promptitude and ease. His three sons were rich in prospects, in favour, and in ability ; but he had three daughters, and he was afraid of wearying the king's bounty. He determined only to mention one of these virgins, eager to kindle the hymeneal torch. The king had too much good taste to leave his work half done ; and the marriage of the eldest daughter with a receiver-general, De Baudry, was brought about by one of those royal phrases which cost nothing and are worth millions. One evening when the monarch was a little sulky, he learned, with a smile, of the existence of another Demoiselle de Fontaine. Her he matched with a young magistrate, of middle-class origin, it is true, but rich and very clever. The king also made him a baron.

When during the next year the Vendean mentioned the name of Mademoiselle Émilie de Fontaine, the king replied in his squeaky little voice,—

“*Amicus Plato sed magis amica natio.*”

Then some days afterwards he treated his *Friend Fontaine* to a very mild quatrain, which he called an epigram, wherein he joked M. de Fontaine about his three daughters so skilfully brought forward in the form of a *Trinity*. If we are to listen to the chronicle, it would seem that the monarch had sought the point of his joke in the *unity* of the three divine persons.

“If the king would condescend to convert his epigram into an epithalam?” said the count, endeavouring to turn the freak to his own advantage.

“If I can see the rhyme, I don’t see the reason of what you say,” answered the king brusquely; for he did not relish

the joke about his poetry, lenient as it was.

From that day forward his intercourse with M. de Fontaine was not so agreeable as it had been. Kings like contradiction better than is generally supposed. Like the youngest child of almost every family, Émilie de Fontaine was a Benjamin whom everybody spoiled. The king's coldness, therefore, caused the count all the more concern because there never was a marriage more difficult to bring about than that of this petted daughter. In order to understand all these difficulties we must enter the precincts of the splendid mansion in which the Commissioner was lodged at the expense of the Civil List. Émilie had passed her childhood on the De Fontaine estate, in the enjoyment of that abundance which suffices to render youth happy. There her slightest wishes were law to her

sisters and brothers, to her mother and father. All her relatives doated on her. She reached years of discretion at the very moment when fortune was showering its favours upon her family, so that the enchantment of her existence continued. The luxury of Paris seemed to her quite as natural as that provincial affluence which had conferred enjoyment on her childhood. Just as her will had never been thwarted during her infancy, when she wanted to follow her joyous inspirations, so she still found others give way to her, when at the age of fourteen she was launched into the whirlpool of society. Having been thus gradually introduced to the pleasures which wealth affords, she found the elegant toilette, the gilded saloon, the well-appointed carriage, as necessary to her as the compliments, more or less sincere, of the flatterer, and the fêtes and frivolities of court life.

Like most spoiled children, she tyrannized over those who loved her, and kept her seductions for the indifferent. Her defects grew with her growth, and the time soon came when her parents were to reap the fruits of her fatal education. At the age of nineteen *Émilie de Fontaine* had not yet made choice among the many young men whom the policy of *M. de Fontaine* brought to his entertainments. Although she was so young, she was as completely self-composed as a woman can be. Her loveliness was so remarkable, that for her to appear in a drawing-room was to reign there ; but, like kings, she had no friends, for she found herself in all places the object of a complaisance before which, perhaps, even a better disposition than hers would have given way. No man, not even an old one, had courage enough to contradict the opinions of a young girl, one look from whom was

sufficient to rekindle passion in the coldest heart. Having been educated with a care that had not been bestowed upon her sisters, she could paint fairly, she spoke Italian and English, she played upon the piano admirably; and then her voice, trained by the best masters, had a certain timbre which made her singing irresistibly seductive. She was so quick, and so well read in every branch of literature, that she might well, in the words of Mascarille, induce one to suppose that people of quality know everything when they come into the world. She could readily talk about the Italian and the Flemish school of painting, the middle ages and the renaissance; rapidly pronounce judgment upon an ancient or a modern book, and bring to light, with cruel grace, the shortcomings of a work. The simplest of her phrases was received by the idolatrous crowd like a fetfa of the sul-

tan by the Turks. Thus, while she dazzled superficial people, her natural tact enabled her to discover those who were not superficial, and for them she was so full of coquetry, that aided by this seductive charm, she managed to escape their criticism.

Beneath this alluring varnish lay a reckless heart, a conviction (shared by many young girls) that no one occupied a sufficiently lofty sphere, to be able to comprehend her mental superiority, and a pride based as much upon her birth as on her beauty. Pending the absence of that potent passion which sooner or later seizes on the heart of woman, she found scope for her youthful ardour in an extravagant love for social distinctions, and she exhibited the most profound contempt for *roturiers*. Very impertinent in her manner to the new nobility, she devoted all her exertions to ensuring her parents' equality

among the most illustrious families of the Faubourg St. Germain.

These views had not escaped the observant eye of Monsieur de Fontaine, who had more than once since the marriage of his elder daughter groaned over the sarcasms and witticisms of Émilie. Consistent people will doubtless be surprised to see the old Vendean, conferring his eldest daughter on a receiver-general, who certainly was the owner of sundry old seigniorial domains, but whose name was not preceded by that particle which distinguished so many of the defenders of the monarchy ; while the second daughter had been married to a judge too recently *baronified*, to make the people forget the fact that his father had sold firewood. This noteworthy alteration in the ideas of a nobleman at the moment when he was attaining his sixtieth year, an epoch at

which men rarely change their convictions, was not due merely to his lamentable sojourn in the modern Babylon, where in the long-run all provincials lose their angularities; the new political conscience of Monsieur de Fontaine was rather the result of the councils and friendship of the king. That royal philosopher had taken a pleasure in converting the Vendean to the ideas demanded by the progress of the nineteenth century, and the renovation of the monarchy. Louis XVIII. wanted to fuse parties, just as Napoleon had fused both men and things. The legitimate monarch, who was perhaps as intelligent as his rival, acted in a different direction. The last of the Bourbons was as anxious to satisfy the people and the imperialists, as the first of the Napoleons was to surround himself with the leaders of the aristocracy, and to endow the church. As

the confidant of the monarch's thoughts, the councillor of state had gradually become one of the most influential and wisest chiefs of that moderate party which, in the name of the national interests, ardently desired the fusion of opinions. He preached the costly principles of constitutional government, and backed with all his might the play of that political seesaw, which enabled his master in the midst of political excitement to govern France. Perhaps M. de Fontaine hoped to gain a peerage through one of those gusts of wind which overtook the legislature, and whose strange results used in those days to surprise the oldest politicians. One of his most stubborn principles was his non-recognition of any nobility in France, except the peers,—the only class whose families had any privileges.

“A nobility without privileges,” he

would say, "is a handle without a tool." Being as far removed from the party of Lafayette, as from that of La Bourdonnaye, he entered with ardour upon that general reconciliation out of which was to arise a new era and a brilliant destiny for France. He sought to convince the families who frequented his reception-rooms, and among whom he visited, that the chances offered by the army and the civil service would thenceforward be but small. He urged mothers to place their sons in independent professions and industrial pursuits, giving them to understand that military offices and the higher grades in the government departments would ere long be reserved, most constitutionally of course, for the younger sons of peers.

In his view, the people had obtained their full share of government appointments through their elective Assembly, and

the judicial and financial posts, which he said would always be, as they had hitherto been, the appanage of the chiefs of the people.

These new ideas of the head of the De Fontaine family, and the prudent marriages which, in the case of his two elder daughters, had resulted from the change, had met with strong opposition at the domestic hearth. The Countess de Fontaine remained faithful to the old beliefs which a woman who was connected through her mother with the Robans, could not recant. But though she had for a time resisted the fortune and happiness of her two elder daughters, she yielded to those private considerations which husband and wife confide to each other at night when their heads are resting on the same pillow. Monsieur de Fontaine coolly demonstrated to his wife

by the most accurate calculations, that their residence in Paris, the necessity of giving entertainments, the splendour of his establishment—a set-off against the hardships which they had so bravely shared in the depths of La Vendée—together with the expenses incurred on behalf of their sons, exhausted almost the whole of their revenues, and that therefore it behoved them to embrace as a heaven-sent favour the opportunity which offered itself of getting their daughters so advantageously settled. Would they not sooner or later enjoy an income of 60,000, 80,000 or 100,000 francs? Such advantageous matches were not to be met with every day for portionless girls. And then, it was high time for them to think of saving, in order to increase the De Fontaine estate, and reconstruct the ancient territorial fortune of the family. The countess yielded, as any

mother in her position would (though perhaps with better grace) have yielded to arguments so persuasive ; but she declared that at least her youngest daughter Émilie should find a husband, calculated to gratify the pride which she had unfortunately helped to develope in her youthful breast.

Thus, those events which should have shed joy over this family, introduced into it a slight leaven of discord. The receiver-general and the young judge were exposed to a ceremonious frigidity, set up by the countess and her daughter Émilie. But their etiquette furnished them yet wider scope for the exercise of their domestic tyranny. The lieutenant-general married Mademoiselle Mongenod, the daughter of a wealthy banker ; the president very wisely married a young lady, whose father had amassed, as a salt merchant, a fortune of two or three millions. Lastly, the third

brother exhibited his fidelity to his plebeian doctrines, by taking to wife Mademoiselle Grostête, the only daughter of the receiver-general of Bourges. But the three sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law derived so much pleasure and personal advantage from remaining in the lofty circles of political power, and the society of the Faubourg St. Germain, that they all agreed to form a little court around the haughty Émilie. This pact between interest and pride, however, was not so well cemented, but that the young sovereign occasionally provoked a revolution in her miniature state. Scenes, not indeed transgressing the limits of good taste, tended to keep up among all the members of that powerful family an ironical mood, which, without interrupting the tone of friendship assumed in public, did sometimes degenerate at home into feel-

ings decidedly uncharitable. Thus the wife of the lieutenant-general, now a baroness, considered herself quite as noble as a Kergarouët, and maintained that a good four thousand a year gave her the right to be as impertinent as her sister-in-law, Émilie, to whom she would sometimes express an ironical hope that she would make a good match, telling her that the daughter of such and such a peer had just married plain Mr. So-and-so. The wife of the Vicomte de Fontaine took pleasure in eclipsing Émilie by the luxurious elegance of her dress, furniture, and carriages. The ironical manner in which the sisters-in-law and the two brothers-in-law sometimes received the pretensions set up by Mademoiselle de Fontaine, threw her into fits of anger, which the production of a shower of epigrams could scarcely calm. When the chief of the family experienced

a certain abatement in the covert and precarious friendship of the monarch, it caused him all the more apprehension because, goaded by the ironical challenges of her sisters-in-law, Émilie had at that crisis fixed her hopes higher than ever.

While affairs were in this condition, and the little family strife was at its worst, the king, into whose good graces M. de Fontaine thought himself on the point of being restored, was attacked by the illness which was destined to carry him off. The wary politician, who knew so well how to steer his bark amid the tempest, very shortly died.

Sure of the favour of the succeeding monarch, the Count de Fontaine exerted himself to the utmost to gather round his youngest daughter the pick of marriageable young men. Those who have tried the solution of that difficult problem—the establishment of a proud and capricious girl,

will perhaps understand the trouble which the poor Vendean took. If he could accomplish the task to the satisfaction of his pet daughter, he would then have achieved a fitting termination of the career which he had been pursuing at Paris for the last ten years.

In respect of the manner in which his family had fastened itself upon the revenues of the various departments of the government it might be compared to the house of Austria, which threatened through its alliances to invade the whole of Europe. Accordingly, the old Vendean went on courageously presenting aspirant after aspirant, so dear to him was the happiness of his daughter. But nothing could be more comical than the way in which the impertinent girl pronounced sentence upon, and appraised the merits of, her admirers. One would have thought that, like one of the princesses whom we read of in the Arabian

Nights, she was rich and handsome enough to have the right of selection from among all the princes in the world. To every suitor she raised an absurd objection followed by an objection yet more absurd. The legs of one were too lanky; another was knock-kneed; this one was near-sighted; that one was named Durand; a third was lame, while nearly all were too fat. Livelier, gayer, more charming than ever, after having rejected two or three applicants, she plunged into the gaieties and balls of the season, scrutinizing with her piercing eyes the celebrities of the day, and delighting in provoking the offers which she invariably refused. Nature had bestowed upon her in profusion the gifts essential to the part of Célimène. Tall and exquisitely formed, Émilie de Fontaine could be imposing or playful, as she pleased. Her neck, which was rather long, enabled her to

assume delightful attitudes of scorn and of impertinence. She had formed a fertile repertory of those airs *de tête* and those feminine gestures which give such fatal or such favourable emphasis to a broken phrase or to a smile. Beautiful black eyes, thick and well-arched eyebrows, conferred upon her features an expression which coquetry and the looking-glass taught her to heighten or to moderate by the steadiness or the tenderness of her glance, by the fixing or gentle flexure of the lips, by the coldness or the graces of her smile. If Émilie wanted to win the heart of any one, there was a certain melody in her pure voice; but she could also endow it with a sort of abrupt clearness when she desired to paralyze the tongue of some prudent swain. Her pale face and alabaster forehead resembled the limpid bosom of a lake which now ripples in the breeze and now resumes its glad

serenity as the wind subsides. Several young men who had suffered from her disdain, accused her of stage-play, but she revenged herself by inspiring the calumniator with a desire to win her favour and then subjecting him without mercy to all the contempt which her coquetry could suggest. Among all the fashionable girls of the day, none understood better than she did how to assume a supercilious air when accosted by a man of talent, or how to display that insulting politeness which makes inferiors of our equals, or how to deluge with impertinence all who attempted to place themselves on a level with herself. Wherever she appeared she seemed to be receiving homage rather than compliments, and even in the presence of a princess her bearing and her airs would have converted the arm-chair in which she was seated into the throne of an empress.

Monsieur de Fontaine discovered all too late how wrong was the direction given to the education of his favourite daughter by the affection of the entire family. The homage of the world—for which the young woman who receives it has afterwards to pay full dearly—had still further developed Émilie's pride and augmented her self-confidence. The general deference had fostered the growth of that egotism which is natural to spoiled children who, like kings, make toys of all who approach them. At this moment the grace of youth and the charm of her accomplishments cast a thick veil over her defects—defects which are all the more odious in woman, because it is only through love and self-sacrifice that she can hope to please. Since nothing escapes the eye of a good father, M. de Fontaine often endeavoured to expound to his daughter the principal pages of the enigmatic book

of life. Vain enterprise ! Again and again he had had cause to mourn over the capricious indocility and the ironical prudence of his daughter ; so that he at last abandoned the difficult task of correcting a sinister disposition, and confined himself to offering, from time to time, his gentle and benevolent advice. But he had the mortification to see his most affectionate words gliding from his daughter's heart, as if it had been made of marble. The eyes of a father are so long sealed that it required some experience ere M. de Fontaine perceived the condescension which his daughter mingled with her rare caresses. She was like a little child which seems to say to her mother, " Make haste and kiss me, and let me go and play." In short, Émilie condescended to be affectionate to her parents. But at times, in accordance with one of those sudden whims which seem inex-

plicable in girls, she shut herself up and would allow herself to be seen but rarely. She would complain that she had to share the affections of her parents with everybody ; and grew jealous of every one, even of her sisters and brothers. Then, after having been at great pains to surround herself with a desert, the flighty girl would blame nature itself for her factitious solitude and self-inflicted sorrows. Armed with her twenty years' experience, she accused fate, because in her ignorance of the fact that the principle of all happiness lies in ourselves, she sought it in the externalities of existence. She would have gone to the end of the world to escape such marriages as her sisters had contracted, and yet her heart was beset with frightful envy at seeing them well and happily married. In fact she sometimes created in the mind of her mother (who was equally

with M. de Fontaine the victim of her singularities) an impression that there was a grain of madness in her composition. But this aberration was easily explainable. Nothing is more common than this secret pride nurtured in the hearts of young women of the upper classes whom nature has endowed with great beauty. They are almost all persuaded that their mothers, having reached the age of forty or fifty, can no longer enter into their feelings nor understand their whims. They fancy that most mothers, being jealous of their daughters, want to dress them in their own fashion, with the premeditated design of outshining them and robbing them of the admiration which is their due. Hence secret tears and mute rebellion against this fancied maternal despotism. In the midst of these griefs, which though founded on an imaginary basis, become real enough, such

girls harbour the additional mania of composing a scheme of existence for themselves, and casting a brilliant horoscope. Their magic consists in taking dreams for realities. They secretly resolve, in their protracted meditations, to withhold their hands and hearts from the man who does not possess certain advantages. They produce an imaginary type, to which, come what may, the future husband must conform. After some practical experience of life, when they have indulged those serious reflections which years bring in their train, the bright hues of their ideal image fade away, under the influence of the world, with its prosaic routine. Then, one fine day they wake up, and find themselves in the full stream of existence, and are quite surprised at being happy, without the nuptial poetry of their dreams. In accordance with such poetry, Mademoiselle Émilie de

Fontaine had, in her fragile wisdom, laid down a programme to which the successful aspirant to her hand must conform. Hence her disdain and hence her sarcasms.

“He must be,”—thus she reasoned with herself,—“not merely young and of the highest birth, but a peer, or the eldest son of a peer. I could not endure to see my arms upon a carriage-door, not surrounded by the flowing folds of an azure mantle, and not to share with princes the privilege of driving through the grand avenue of the Champs Élysées during the Long-champs meetings. Moreover, my father maintains, that the day is coming, when a peerage will be the highest dignity in France. I should like my husband to be a soldier, reserving to myself the right to call on him to retire; and he must be decorated, so that arms will be presented as we pass.”

These uncommon distinctions would go for nothing if this imaginary being were not extremely amiable, handsome, and clever, and above all—if *he were not slim*. Slimness, that corporal grace, however transient it may be, especially under a representative government, was a *sine quâ non*. Mademoiselle de Fontaine had a certain ideal measure which served as a model. The young man who did not at the first glance conform to the required condition, was not even favoured with a second look.

“Oh ! my God ! how fat that gentleman is !” was with her the expression of sovereign contempt.

According to her, people endowed with an honest corpulence, were incapable of feeling ; they must be bad husbands, and altogether unfit for civilized society. Though plumpness was looked upon as a beauty in eastern climes, it seemed to her

a misfortune for women ; in a man it was a crime.

These paradoxical opinions produced, thanks to the liveliness with which they were enunciated, a certain amount of amusement.

But, nevertheless, the Count de Fontaine felt that the pretensions of his daughter, the absurdity of which would very soon attract the attention of certain ladies, who were as clear-sighted as they were malicious, would end by rendering those pretensions fatally ridiculous. He was afraid lest the peculiar notions of his daughter should degenerate in pronounced bad taste. He was afraid that an unpitying world might be already sily laughing at a person who remained so long upon the stage, without any dénouement to the piece which she was acting. Several of the actors, annoyed at having been rejected, seemed to be waiting

for any slight disaster, which would enable them to revenge themselves ; while the idle and the unconcerned began to grow weary. Admiration is always exhausting to human nature. The old Vendean knew, as well as any one, that, difficult as is the art of selecting the right moment for appearing on the stage of the world or of the court, for entering a drawing-room or a theatre, it is still more difficult to leave them in the nick of time. And accordingly, during the first winter that followed the accession of Charles X., he, in conjunction with his three sons and his sons-in-law, redoubled his efforts to attract to his receptions the most eligible men to be found in Paris, and among the deputies of the departments. The brilliance of his entertainments, the splendour of his dining-room, and his dinners, redolent of truffles, rivalled those celebrated banquets whereby the ministers

of the period secured the votes of their parliamentary troops.

The worthy député was thereupon singled out, as one of the most potent corruptors of legislative integrity in that illustrious Chamber, which seemed to be dying of indigestion.

It was a strange result of his endeavours to get his daughter married, that he should preserve his popularity at court. Perhaps he found it secretly advantageous to sell his truffles twice. This accusation, which had its origin among certain Liberal carpers, who compensated the dearth of their adherents in the house by the abundance of their speeches, did not stick. The conduct of the Poitou nobleman was, for the most part, so upright and honourable, that he altogether escaped those epigrams which the malicious journals of the epoch hurled at the 300 voters of the centre,

the ministers, the cooks, the directors-general, the princes of the fork, and the official defenders, who supported the Villèle administration. At the conclusion of this campaign, during which M. de Fontaine had several times taken the whole of his troops into action, he thought that his collection of admirers would not on this occasion be a mere optical illusion for his daughter, and that it was high time for her to come to a decision.

He derived a certain amount of internal satisfaction from the due fulfilment of his duty as a father ; and besides, after having brought into play every resource, he hoped that among the many hearts laid at the feet of the capricious *Émilie* there might be found at least one whom she might have favoured.

Feeling that he could not repeat such an effort, and weary of his daughter's conduct,

he determined to have a consultation with her one morning towards the end of Lent, when the sitting of the House was not of a nature imperatively to demand his vote. While his valet was artistically designing upon his yellow cranium the delta of powder which, in conjunction with the pendant *ailes de pigeon*, formed his venerable head-gear, Émilie's father, not without a secret tremor, requested his old *valet de chambre* to go and ask the haughty damsel to pay a visit to the head of the family.

“Joseph,” said the old nobleman, when his head-gear was adjusted, “take away this napkin, draw the curtains, arrange the armchairs, shake the chimney-cloth, and put it on straight, and then dust the room. Now, just open the window, and let us have a little fresh air.”

The count multiplied his orders and

made Joseph quite out of breath. Joseph, who guessed his master's motive, restored some neatness to the room, which was naturally the most neglected in the house, and succeeded in producing a certain amount of order among the heaps of accounts, boxes, books, and other furniture of this sanctuary, in which the affairs of the royal demesnes were transacted. When Joseph had succeeded in introducing some order into this chaos, and had brought to the front, just as if he had been dressing the window of a fashionable shop, whatever would make the best show, and was calculated to produce, by means of its tints, a sort of bureaucratic poetry, he stopped in the midst of the maze of papers piled up in certain places, even on the carpet, gave a little nod of self-approval, and left the room.

The unhappy sinecurist by no means

shared the satisfaction of his servant. Before taking his seat in his large arm-chair, he looked around him with an air of distrust, examined his dressing-gown with a hostile eye, swept away some particles of snuff, carefully wiped his nose, arranged the shovel and the tongs, stirred the fire, pulled up the heels of his slippers, threw back his little pigtail, which had assumed a horizontal position between the collar of his waistcoat and that of his dressing-gown, and caused it to resume its perpendicular position ; then he gave a touch of the broom to the cinders of a hearth which afforded strong evidence of the inveteracy of his catarrh. In short, the old man did not sit down until he had glanced his eye for the last time over his study, in the hope that there was nothing to give rise to the very comical and impertinent remarks with which his daughter was wont to reply to

his sage advice. On this occasion he did not want to compromise his paternal dignity. He gingerly took a pinch of snuff, and cleared his throat two or three times, as if he were about to demand, when he heard the light footstep of his daughter, who came in humming an air from “*Il Barbieri*.”

“Good morning, father. What do you want me for so early?”

Having uttered these words as if they were the refrain of the air which she was singing, she kissed the count, not with that familiar fondness which makes the filial sentiment so sweet, but with the careless levity of a mistress who is sure that, do what she will, she will please.

“My dear child,” said M. de Fontaine gravely, “I have sent for you in order to talk with you very seriously about your future. The necessity in which you are

now placed of making such choice of a husband as may ensure your permanent happiness—”

“My dear father,” said Émilie, interrupting her father in her most endearing tones, “it seems to me that the armistice, entered into between you and me in regard to my admirers, has not yet expired.”

“Émilie, let us, from this day forth, cease to joke about so important a matter. For some time past, my dear child, those who truly love you have united their efforts to secure you a proper establishment, and you would be guilty of ingratitude were you to receive with levity the proofs of good-will which, not only I, but others also, shower upon you.”

On hearing these words the young lady looked with an eye of mischievous investigation at the furniture of her father’s study; she then selected the particular

armchair which seemed to have least frequently afforded a seat to those who came to solicit her father's favours, placed it on the other side of the fireplace, so that she might face her father, assumed an attitude so grave, that it was impossible to avoid seeing therein certain traces of irony, and crossed her arms over the rich trimming of a tippet *à la neige*, whose numerous frills of tulle were thus mercilessly crumpled. After having cast a laughing side-glance at her old father's anxious countenance, she spoke. "I never heard you say, father, that the government delivered its oracles in a dressing-gown. But, no matter," added she, "the people must not be critical. Let me hear what are your projects of law and official communications."

"I might not always be in a position to make you any, you young madcap. Listen

Émilie. It is not my intention any longer to run the risk of injuring my reputation, which is a part of my childrens' fortune, by recruiting the regiment of partners whom it is your good pleasure to put to flight every spring. You have already been the cause of several dangerous misunderstandings with certain families. I hope that to-day you more fully understand the difficulties of your own position and of ours. You are twenty-two years of age, and you ought to have been married nearly three years ago. Your brothers and your two sisters have all formed wealthy and happy unions. But, my child, the expenditure which those unions have involved, and the style in which we are living on your account, have made such a hole in our income, that it is as much as I can do to give you a portion of a hundred thousand francs. From to-day I want to study the future of

your mother, who ought not to be sacrificed to her children. If I should die, Émilie, Madame de Fontaine ought not to be left to the tender mercies of any one. She ought to continue to enjoy the affluence by which I have recompensed, all too late, her devotion in my early misfortunes. You see, my child, that the insignificance of your portion bears no sort of proportion to your ideas of grandeur. Even that portion will be a sacrifice which I have not made for any of my other children ; but they have generously agreed never to taunt you with the advantage which we are about to confer on a child too well beloved."

"In *their* position," said Émilie, shaking her head ironically.

"My daughter, never try thus to depreciate those who love you. Learn that it is only the poor who are generous, The rich have always excellent reasons for

not abandoning twenty thousand francs to a relative. Now, don't sulk, my child, and let us talk rationally. Among the young fellows who are looking out for a wife have you not noticed M. de Manerville?"

"Oh, he says *zeu* instead of *jeu*; he is always looking at his feet because he considers them small; and he looks at himself in the glass. Besides, he is fair, and I don't like fair men."

"Well, then, there is Monsieur de Beaudenord?"

"He is not a nobleman; he is badly built and thickset; I grant you he is dark. The two gentlemen ought to come to an agreement to unite their resources. The former ought to give his figure and his name to the second, who might keep his own hair, and then—perhaps—"

"What have you got to say against M. de Rastignac?"

“Madame de Nucingen has converted him into a banker.”

“And our relation the Viscount de Portenduère ? ”

“A lad who dances badly, and besides has no fortune. And then, father, none of them has a title. I should like to be at least a countess, like my mother.”

“Then you have not seen any one this winter whom”

“No, father.”

“Then what is it that you want ? ”

“The son of a peer.”

“Daughter, you are mad,” said M. de Fontaine, rising.

But all at once he looked upwards and seemed to imbibe a fresh dose of resignation, from some religious reflection. Then, looking at his child with a look of fatherly kindness, which produced some effect upon her, he took her hand, pressed it, and said

tenderly, "I call God to witness, you poor deluded creature, I have conscientiously fulfilled my duties towards you; conscientiously, did I say? lovingly, Émilie. Yes, God knows that I have this winter introduced to you more than one honest man whose capacity, morals, and disposition were known to me, and all of them seemed good enough for you. My child, my task is accomplished. From to-day you are the arbiter of your own destiny. I am both glad and sorry, at the same time, to find myself acquitted of the heaviest of all a father's duties. I do not know whether you will hear much longer a voice which unfortunately has never been severe, but remember that the happiness of married life depends less upon brilliant qualities and wealth, than on mutual esteem. Such happiness is, from its very nature, modest and retiring. Now, my child, my consent

is given beforehand to the son-in-law whom you present to me ; but if you should be unhappy, remember that you will have no right to blame your father. I will not refuse to act in the matter, and to assist you, provided only that your choice be serious and definitive. I will not compromise a second time the respect which is due to my grey hairs."

The affection displayed by her father, and the solemn tone of his pathetic harangue, made a keen impression on Mademoiselle de Fontaine, but she concealed the depth of her feelings, seated herself on the knees of the count, who had sat down still trembling with emotion, and lavished on him her tenderest caresses, cajoling him so gracefully, that the old man's forehead grew calm again. When Émilie thought that her father had sufficiently recovered from his painful ex-

citement, she said to him in a low tone,—

“I must thank you, father, for your delicate attention; you had your room put in order for the reception of your darling daughter. Perhaps you did not know that you would find her so foolish and rebellious. But, father, is it then so difficult to marry a peer of France? Ah, at all events, you won’t refuse me your advice.”

“No, poor child, no, and I will call out to you more than once—‘Beware.’ Consider, then, that the peerage is too new a spring in our *governmentability*, as the late king used to say, for peers to possess large fortunes. Those who are rich wish to become still more so. The most opulent of all the members of our peerage has not half the income of the poorest member of the English House of Lords. Thus, the peers of France will look out

for wealthy heiresses for their sons, no matter where they may spring from. This necessity for making wealthy marriages will last for more than two centuries. It is just possible that by looking about for the lucky chance which you desire, a search which may cost you the best years of your life, your beauty (for a good many men marry for love in this age) your beauty, I say, may bring about a miracle. When experience is covered by so blooming a face as yours, one may look for miracles. Do you not, in the first place, possess the gift of discovering worth by the greater or smaller bulk of the human body? That is no slight accomplishment. And therefore, it is needless for me to point out to a person so wise as yourself, all the difficulties of the undertaking. I am certain that you will never credit a stranger with good sense because his face is pre-

possessing, or with high moral qualities because he has a good figure; and finally, I quite agree with you in thinking that all peers' sons ought to have an air of their own and characteristic manners. Although now-a-days there are no distinctive symbols of rank, these young men will perhaps possess for you a *je ne sais quoi*, which will reveal them to your observation. Besides you keep your heart in check just like a good horseman, who is sure to keep his charger from stumbling. My daughter, I wish you good luck."

"You are laughing at me, father. But I declare to you that I would sooner go and die in Mademoiselle de Condé's convent, than not be the wife of a peer of France."

She escaped from her father's arms, and proud of being her own mistress, she went away singing the air "*Cara non dubitare*," from the "*Matrimonio Segreto*."

It happened that that day was a birthday

in the family. At dessert, Madame Planat, Émilie's elder sister, the wife of the receiver-general, talked loud enough to be overheard, of a young American, the owner of an immense fortune, who had fallen desperately in love with Émilie, and had made her a brilliant offer.

"He is a banker, I believe," said Émilie carelessly. "I don't like people connected with finance."

"But Émilie," said the Baron de Villaine, the husband of Émilie's second sister, "you like the magistracy just as little, so that if you reject untitled landowners, from what class will you choose your husband?"

"Especially taking into consideration your theory of thinness," added the lieutenant-general.

"I know what will suit me," replied the young girl.

"My sister requires a good name, a

handsome young man, with a career before him, and an income of a hundred thousand francs.'

"Monsieur de Marsay, for example," said the Baroness de Fontaine.

"I know, my dear sister," replied Émilie, "that I shall not make one of those foolish matches of which I have seen so many. But to avoid these matrimonial discussions, I declare, that I shall consider those who speak to me of marriage as the enemies of my peace of mind."

An uncle of Émilie, an old vice-admiral of seventy, whose fortune had just received an accession of 800*l.* a year in consequence of the law of indemnity, who was in a position to speak stern truths to his grand-niece, and was extremely fond of her, now interposed with a view to destroying the bitterness of the conversation. "Don't tease my poor Émilie. Don't you

see that she is waiting until the Duc de Bordeaux comes of age."

The old man's joke was received with general laughter, while Émilie retorted,—

"Take care that I don't marry you, you old lunatic;" but the last words were fortunately drowned amid the noise.

"My children," said Madame de Fontaine, in order to tone down this impertinence. "Émilie, like all the rest of you, will consult no one but her mother."

"Oh, indeed," said Mademoiselle de Fontaine, with great distinctness, "in a matter which only concerns myself, I shall only consult myself."

Every eye was directed to the head of the family. Every one seems curious to see what course he would adopt in order to maintain his dignity; for not only was the aged Vendean held in high esteem by the world at large, but, more fortunate in

this respect than many fathers, he was appreciated by his family, all the members of which had recognized the solid qualities which had enabled him to make the fortunes of those who were related to him. Accordingly, he was surrounded by that profound respect which English families and certain aristocratic houses on the continent entertain for the representative of the genealogical tree. There was a profound silence, and the eyes of the assembled guests travelled from the proud and pouting face of the spoiled child, to the stern faces of M. and Madame de Fontaine.

“I have left my daughter Émilie the mistress of her own lot,” was the answer which the Count de Fontaine uttered in his deepest tones.

Thereupon the relatives and guests looked at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with

a look in which curiosity was blended with pity. The language of the count seemed to indicate that paternal kindness had been exhausted in the struggle with a disposition known by the family to be incorrigible. The sons-in-law murmured, and the brothers launched at their better halves, sarcastic smiles. From that moment no one took any further interest in the marriage of the haughty girl. Her old uncle, in his character as an old sailor, was the only person who dared to encounter her broadsides, and endure her whims, and was always ready to return shot for shot.

When the fine weather had set in and the budget had been voted, the De Fontaine family, a genuine model of the great parliamentary houses on the other side of the Channel, which have a footing in every ministry, and ten votes in the Commons,

flew like a nest of birds to the lovely sites of Aulnay, Antony, and Châtenay. The opulent receiver-general had recently purchased in those regions, a country house as a residence for his wife, who remained at Paris only during the session. Although the beautiful Émilie despised plebeians, she did not carry her feeling so far as to disdain the advantages of a fortune amassed by middle-class industry. She, therefore, accompanied her sister to her sumptuous villa, not so much from affection for those members of her family who took refuge in it, as because the rules of good society imperiously demand that every woman who has even the slenderest self-respect, should leave Paris during summer. The verdant plains of Sceaux admirably fulfilled the conditions imposed by society, and by the duties of public life.

Since it is very doubtful whether the

fame of the Bal de Sceaux has ever passed beyond the limits of the department of the Seine, we must enter into some details about this hebdomadal festival, which from its importance at the time we are speaking of, threatened to become an institution. The environs of the little town of Sceaux enjoy a reputation arising from their sites, which are considered charming. It may be that they are after all extremely common-place, and owe their celebrity merely to the stupidity of the good citizens of Paris, who, when they emerge from the gulfs of freestone in which they are buried, would be inclined to admire the plains of La Beauce. But since the poetic shades of Aulnay, the hills of Antony, and the valley of La Bièvre are inhabited by certain travelled artists, by foreigners, who are very hard to please, and by a number of pretty women, who

are not wanting in good taste, it is probable that the Parisians are right. But Sceaux possesses, for the Parisian, another attraction not less potent. In the middle of a garden commanding delightful views, is to be found an immense rotunda open on every side, but crowned with a dome of great lightness and extent, and supported by pillars. This rustic dais forms the covering of a dancing-saloon. It rarely happens that even the most starched gentle folks of the neighbourhood do not once or twice during the season pay a visit to this palace of the rustic Terpsichore—either in glittering cavalcades, or in those light and elegant vehicles which sprinkle with dust the philosophic foot-passenger. The hope of seeing some women of the upper ranks, and of being seen by them; the hope, less frequently betrayed, of meeting some young peasant

girls (who are as cunning as judges), draws to the bal de Sceaux, on Sunday, swarms of attorneys' clerks, of the disciples of *Æsculapius*, and of those young fellows whose fair skins and fresh complexions are preserved by the damp atmosphere of the back-shops of Paris. Accordingly a goodly number of bourgeois marriages have been planned to the sounds of the orchestra, which occupies the centre of this circular saloon. If the roof could only speak, how many love stories it could tell!

This interesting medley conferred upon the bal de Sceaux, at that time, a keener interest than the other two or three balls in the environs of Paris excited; and moreover, its rotunda, the beauty of the site, and the attractions of the garden, gave it an incontestable superiority over its rivals. *Émilie* was the first to exhibit a desire to go and "do the vulgar," at this gay ball of

the arrondissement. She expected to derive immense enjoyment from finding herself in the midst of such a gathering. Her wish to wander among such a crowd created some astonishment; but then is not the incognito one of the greatest pleasures of the great? Mademoiselle de Fontaine found amusement in picturing to herself all these citizen figures; she imagined herself leaving in many a bourgeois breast the recollection of an enchanting dance or smile, laughed beforehand at the women who prided themselves on their dancing, and prepared her crayons for the scenes with which she expected to enrich the pages of her satirical album. Sunday did not come round quickly enough to suit her impatience. The good company from the Planat villa set out on foot, so as not to betray the rank of the party who were about to honour the ball with their presence. They had dined early, and the most beautiful

evening of that month of May favoured the aristocratic escapade. Mademoiselle de Fontaine was quite surprised to find, under the roof of the rotunda, certain quadrille parties composed of persons who seemed to be of good social position. She saw, it is true, here and there, some young men, who seemed to have spent a month's savings for the sake of shining for a day, and she observed several couples whose frank enjoyment did not at all savour of matrimony; but instead of reaping a harvest she had to glean. It surprised her to see that pleasure dressed in muslin was very like pleasure dressed in satin, and that the bourgeoisie danced as gracefully as the aristocracy, and in some cases even better. Most of the dresses were simple, and worn with ease. Those who, in this assemblage, represented the suzerains of the territory, that is to say, the peasants, confined them-

selves to their corners, with wonderful politeness.

Even Mademoiselle de Fontaine had to devote a certain amount of study to the divers elements of which the meeting was composed, before she could discover any subject for ridicule. But she had neither time to devote to her malicious criticism, nor leisure to listen to many of those striking conversations which the caricaturist hails with so much delight. In this vast field the haughty creature suddenly discovered a flower (the metaphor is seasonable) whose splendour and whose colours acted upon her imagination with all the charm of novelty. It frequently happens to us, that we look at a dress, a wall, a piece of white paper, with so much abstraction, that we do not at once perceive some stain or some shining points which, subsequently, suddenly strike the eye, as if they had appeared only at the moment

when we are first conscious of them. By a sort of moral phenomenon, very similar to that which I have mentioned, Mademoiselle de Fontaine suddenly recognized, in a certain young man, the type of that exterior perfection of which she had dreamed so long. Mademoiselle de Fontaine had seated herself on one of the rude chairs which defined the necessary boundaries of the saloon, at the end of the group formed by her family, so as to be able to follow the inclination of the moment by getting up and advancing as she pleased ; for she acted in regard to the living tableaux, and the groups presented to her notice in the hall, just as she would have done at an exhibition at the museum. She fixed her eye-glasses on a person only two yards distant, and made remarks, just as if she were criticizing or praising a painted head, or a picture of genre.

Her eye, after having wandered over the

vast animated picture, was all at once attracted by the face of which I spoke, which looked as if it had been purposely stuck in a corner of the canvas, in the very best light, as a figure out of all proportion with the rest. The stranger, who seemed absorbed and solitary, was leaning lightly against one of the columns which support the roof, his arms were folded, and his head drooped, as if he had been placed there to have his portrait taken. But the attitude, though full of elegance and pride, was perfectly free from affectation. There was not the faintest gesture to indicate that, like Alexander, Lord Byron, and other great men, he was presenting the three-quarter face and slightly bending his head, solely for the purpose of attracting attention. His steady gaze in following the movements of a lady who was dancing, bore traces of some deep feeling. His elegant and easy figure recalled

the proportions of the Apollo. His beautiful black hair curled naturally upon his lofty forehead. At a single glance Mademoiselle de Fontaine perceived the fineness of his linen, the newness of his kid gloves, which had evidently come from the best maker, and his small feet, neatly shod with a boot of Irish leather. He did not wear any of those mean trinkets of which the old fops of the National Guard and the Lovelaces of the counter are so fond, but a black riband, to which his eye-glass was attached, hung over his well-shaped waistcoat. The exacting Émilie had never seen a man's eyes shaded by lashes so long and strongly curved. Love and melancholy breathed in the face, with its olive-hued and masculine complexion. The mouth seemed ever ready to smile, and raise the corners of the eloquent lips; but this tendency, far from suggesting gaiety, seemed rather to betrav

a graceful sadness. There was too much promise in the head, and distinction in the bearing, to call forth the expression "What a fine man," or "What a good-looking man." You wanted to know him. The most perspicacious observer would at sight of the stranger, have been induced to regard him as a man of talent, attracted to the village *fête* by some powerful motive.

Such a mass of reflections did not cost Émilie more than a moment's attention, in the course of which this privileged being, thus subjected to a severe analysis, became the object of a secret admiration. She did not say to herself "He must be a peer of France," but "Oh, if he is only noble, and he cannot fail to be." She did not finish her thought, but rose at once, and, followed by her brother the lieutenant-general, went towards the column, pretending to be watching the gay quadrilles, though by an

optical device familiar to women, she did not miss a single movement of the young man, whom she was approaching. The stranger politely drew back, in order to make room for the two new comers, and took up his position against another pillar. Émilie, who was as much annoyed by the stranger's politeness as she would have been by an act of rudeness, began to talk to her brother in a voice much louder than the canons of good taste permitted ; she assumed certain *airs de tête*, and gesticulated and laughed immoderately, less to amuse her brother than to attract the attention of the imperturbable Unknown. But all her little artifices failed. Then Mademoiselle de Fontaine followed the direction of the young man's eyes, and perceived the cause of his indifference.

In the midst of the quadrille, immediately in front of her, there was dancing a pale

young woman, who resembled those Scottish goddesses introduced by Girodet into his grand composition, Ossian receiving the warriors of France. Émilie thought that she recognized in the young dancer an illustrious lady, who had lately taken up her abode in a neighbouring district. Her companion was a youth of fifteen, whose red hands, nankeen breeches, blue coat, and white shoes, showed that her passion for dancing prevented her from being fastidious in the matter of partners. Her movements showed no trace of her apparent weakness, but a slight flush was already visible in her pale cheeks and her complexion was beginning to grow more lively. Mademoiselle de Fontaine drew near to the quadrille party, in order to examine the strange lady as she returned to her place, while her *vis à vis* executed the same figure. But the Unknown came up, and bending over the pretty dancer,

said in a voice at once gentle and commanding, "Clara, my child, don't dance any more," words which were distinctly overheard by the inquisitive Émilie. Clara pouted a little, bowed her head in token of obedience, and then smiled. After the termination of the quadrille, the young man showed all the attention of a lover in covering the young girl's shoulders with a Cashmere shawl, and placing her in a position where she would be sheltered from the wind. Then, soon afterwards, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, seeing them quit their seats, and walk round the enclosure, as people do when about to depart, contrived to follow them, under the pretence of admiring the various views from the garden. Her brother lent himself, with a mischievous good humour, to the vagaries of the somewhat devious march. Émilie then caught sight of the handsome couple, getting into an elegant Tilbury, which had been left under the care

of a liveried and mounted servant. Just at the moment when the young man, having taken his seat, was adjusting the reins, Émilie first encountered from him one of those careless glances which one directs at a large crowd, and then she had the slight satisfaction of seeing him look back twice; an example which the young lady followed. Was it through jealousy?

“I presume that you have now seen enough of the garden, and that we can go back to the ball,” said her brother.

“I am quite willing,” she replied. “Do you think that she is a young relative of Lady Dudley?”

“Lady Dudley may have a young relative staying with her; but certainly not a young female relative!” said the Baron de Fontaine.

The next day Mademoiselle de Fontaine displayed an inclination for a ride. She

gradually accustomed her old uncle and her brothers to accompany her in sundry morning rides, which, she said, were very conducive to her health. She exhibited a marked predilection for the vicinity of the village inhabited by Lady Dudley. But in spite of her cavalry manœuvres, she did not catch sight of the stranger again so speedily as the glad research, to which she abandoned herself, induced her to hope. She returned on several occasions to the Bal de Sceaux without meeting there the young Englishman, who had fallen from heaven to tyrannize over and adorn her dreams.

Although nothing spurs the rising passion of a young girl so much as an obstacle, there came a moment, nevertheless, when Émilie de Fontaine, almost despairing of the success of an enterprise, whose eccentricity will give some idea of the hardihood

of her character, was on the point of giving up her strange and clandestine pursuit.

She might, indeed, have wandered for a long time around the village of Châtenay without again seeing her Unknown; for the youthful Clara, since such was the name which Mademoiselle de Fontaine had overheard, was not an Englishwoman, and the supposed stranger did not inhabit the flowery and perfumed groves of Châtenay.

One evening Émilie, having gone out for a ride with her uncle, to whom the gout had granted, during the fine weather, a considerable cessation of hostilities, met Lady Dudley. Seated in the open carriage, by the side of the illustrious foreigner, was Monsieur de Vandenesse. Émilie recognized the handsome pair, and her suspicions were dissolved, as a dream dissolves,—in a moment.

Vexed, as any woman who had been

foiled, would be, she turned rein so rapidly that her old uncle had the greatest possible difficulty in following her; so great was the speed to which she had urged her pony.

“It would seem that I have grown too old to understand these brains of twenty,” said the old sailor to himself, as he put his horse to a gallop, “or perhaps the young folks of to-day are not like what they used to be. But what can be the matter with my niece? now she is walking her pony as quietly as a gendarme patrolling the streets of Paris. One would think that she wants to beset that worthy bourgeois, who looks to me like an author dreaming over his verses, for he seems to have an album in his hand. On my word, I am a great dolt. Isn’t it the young man we are in search of?”

As this thought struck him, the old

sailor checked his horse's pace, in order to place himself noiselessly at his niece's side. The vice-admiral had been guilty of too many peccadilloes in 1771 and the following years, a period in our annals when gallantry was in vogue, not to perceive at a glance that Émilie, had by the greatest chance, met the stranger of the Bal de Sceaux.

In spite of the veil which old age had spread over his grey eyes, the Count de Kergaroët could recognize the signs of unusual excitement in his niece, notwithstanding the immobility of feature which she endeavoured to assume.

The penetrating eyes of the young lady were fixed in a kind of stupor upon the stranger, who was walking quietly before her.

“Just so,” said the sailor to himself, “she will follow him, like a pirate after a

merchantman. And when she has lost sight of him, she will be in a state of despair at not knowing who and what her lover is, and whether he is a marquis or a shopkeeper. Truly, young folks ought always to have an old periwig like me at their elbows."

He all at once, and without any warning, urged on his horse, so as to make his niece's start off also, and then rode so quickly between her and the young pedestrian, that the latter was forced to take refuge on the sloping turf which bordered the road. Checking his horse suddenly, the count cried out,—

"Couldn't you have got out of the way?"

"Excuse me, sir," replied the stranger. "I did not know that it was for *me* to apologize to *you*, for your having very nearly knocked me down."

“ Well, let’s drop the subject, my friend,” replied the sailor, in a voice whose sneering tone was positively insulting.

At the same time the count raised his whip as if to lash his horse, and touching the shoulder of his interlocutor, said,—

“ The liberal bourgeois is a reasoner, and every reasoner should be prudent ! ”

The young fellow mounted the slope when he heard this sarcasm ; then crossing his arms, he replied in feeling tones,—

“ I cannot think, when I look at your white hair, that you still find amusement in picking quarrels ”

“ White hair,” cried the sailor, interrupting him, “ you lie in your throat, it is only grey.”

A dispute thus commenced, waxed so warm in a few seconds that the younger adversary forgot the tone of moderation which he had constrained himself to pre-

serve. At the moment when the Count de Kergaroüet saw his niece approaching them, and exhibiting every symptom of lively apprehension, he gave his name to his antagonist, asking him to say nothing in the presence of the young lady, who was under his escort. The stranger could not repress a smile, and gave his card to the old sailor, telling him at the same time that he was living in a country-house at Chevreuse, which he pointed out, and then made off.

“You very nearly injured that poor péquin, niece,” said the count, hastening to meet Émilie. “Have you forgotten how to manage your horse? You leave me stuck there to compromise my dignity in an endeavour to cover your follies; whereas, had you remained, a single glance from you, or one of those pretty speeches which you can make so well when you are not imper-

tinent, would have set everything right, even had you broken his arm."

"Why, my dear uncle, it was your horse, not mine, that caused the accident. I really believe that you have lost the art of riding, you are no longer so good a horseman as you were last year. But instead of discussing trifles—"

"Trifles, by Jingo! you call it a trifle for a fellow to be insolent to your uncle?"

"Ought we not to go and find out whether the young man is hurt? He is limping, uncle, see there!"

"No, no! he is running. Ah, I gave him a rough lecture!"

"Ah, uncle, that is you all over!"

"Nay, nay, niece," said the count, stopping Émilie's horse by laying hold of the bridle. "I don't see the necessity of making advances to some shopkeeper, who ought to deem himself only too fortunate

in having been knocked down by a charming young lady, or by the commander of 'La Belle Poule.' "

"Why do you take him to be a roturier, my dear uncle? It seems to me that he has very distinguished manners."

"Oh, everybody has good manners now-a-days, niece."

"No, uncle, *everybody* has *not* the air and manner which the habit of frequenting good society confers, and I would gladly make a bet with you, that this young fellow is a man of family."

"You have not had much time to examine him."

"But this is not the first time I have seen him."

"No, nor the first time that you have tried to find him!" replied the admiral, laughing.

Émilie blushed; her uncle enjoyed leav-

ing her for some time to her embarrassment, and then said to her,—

“Émilie, you know that I love you as much as if you were my own child, just because you are the only one of the family who possesses that legitimate pride which high birth confers. Who the deuce, my dear grandniece, would have thought that good principles would become so rare? Well, I want to be your confidant. Now, I see, my darling, that this young gentleman is not quite an object of indifference to you. But, they would have the laugh of us in the family if we set sail under an unworthy flag; you know what that means; therefore, let me assist you, niece. Let us keep our own counsel, and I promise to produce him in the midst of your assemblies.”

“*When, uncle?*”

“To-morrow.”

“But, dear uncle, I am not to be fettered in any way?”

“Not at all ; and you may bombard him, set fire to him, and turn him adrift like an old carack, if such be your good pleasure. He won’t be the first that you have served so, eh ?”

“You *are* kind, uncle !”

As soon as the count reached home he put on his spectacles, quietly drew the card from his pocket, and read “Maximilien Longueville, Rue du Sentier.”

“Set your mind at rest, my dear niece,” said he to Émilie, “you may harpoon him in all tranquillity of mind ; he belongs to one of our historic families, and if he be not a peer of France, he will infallibly become one.”

“How do you know all that ?”

“Ah, that is my secret.”

“You know his name then ?”

The count silently inclined his grey head, which bore no faint resemblance to the trunk of some old oak, around which a

few leaves, withered by autumnal frosts, are fluttering. At this signal, Émilie began to exert the ever-budding power of her coquetry. Experienced in the art of cajoling the old sailor, she showered upon him the most childlike caresses and the tenderest words; she even went so far as to kiss him, in order to extort from him the revelation of so weighty a secret. The old man, who passed his existence in getting his niece to act scenes of this description, and very often rewarded her with the price of a dress, or by giving up his box at the opera for her use, took a delight on this particular occasion in being entreated, and especially kissed. But, as he protracted his enjoyment too long, Émilie grew angry, changed her caresses for sarcasms, and sulked. Then, conquered by her curiosity, she returned to the attack. The diplomatic sailor extracted from his niece a

solemn promise, to be for the future more reserved, more docile, and less headstrong ; to spend less, and above all to tell him everything. This treaty having been concluded and sealed with a kiss imprinted on Émilie's white forehead, he led her to a corner of the drawing-room, set her on his knee, placed his two thumbs upon the card so as to hide it, and then letter by letter, disclosed the name of Longueville, obstinately refusing to let her see anything more. This circumstance intensified the secret feeling of Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who, during a large portion of the night, conjured up the brightest pictures of those dreams, on which her aspirations had been fed. At last, thanks to that chance which she had so often prayed for, Émilie now saw something very different from a mere chimera at the root of the imaginary riches with which she gilded her matrimo-

nial future. Like all young women who are ignorant of the dangers that wait on love and marriage, she grew enthusiastic over the treacherous externals of marriage and of love. Or, in other words, her passion sprang up as all these fancies of early youth do spring—sweet, cruel errors which exercise so sinister an influence on such young girls as are inexperienced enough to assume the whole burden of providing for their future happiness.

The next morning, before Émilie was awake, her uncle had made an excursion to Chevreuse. Finding the young man whom, on the preceding evening, he had so persistently insulted, standing in the court of an elegant villa, he accosted him with the affectionate politeness characteristic of the gentlemen of the old French court.

“Well, my dear sir, who would have ventured to tell me that at the age of

seventy-three I should involve myself in a duel with the son, or perhaps the grandson, of one of my best friends? I am a vice-admiral, sir, and that is equivalent to telling you that I think as little of a duel as I do of smoking a cigar. In my time, two young fellows could never strike up an intimacy without having first seen the colour of each other's blood. But, zounds, yesterday, in my capacity of old sailor, I had taken a little too much rum on board, and ran foul of you. There is my hand; I would rather receive a hundred rebuffs from a Longueville, than cause his family the slightest grief."

Whatever coolness the young man constrained himself to throw into his bearing towards the Count de Kergarouët, he could not long withstand the frank goodnature of his manner, and suffered the old man to shake him by the hand.

“You were just going for a ride,” said the count. “Don’t let me interfere with you. But, unless your arrangements are made, come with me and dine at the Planat Lodge to-day. My nephew, the Count de Fontaine, is a man whom it is essential to know. Ah, I intend to indemnify you for my rudeness, by introducing you to five of the prettiest women in Paris. Yes, yes, young man, your brow unknits itself now. I am fond of young men, and I like to see them happy. Their happiness recalls to me the joyous hours of my early days, when there were plenty of love affairs as well as duels. We were gay in those times. Now-a-days you philosophize and take everything seriously, as if there had been no such thing as a fifteenth or sixteenth century.”

“But, sir, are we not right? The sixteenth century gave only religious liberty

to Europe, and the nineteenth will give it political lib—”

“ Oh, don’t let us talk politics. I am a blockhead of an *ultra*, look you. But I don’t want to prevent young folks from being revolutionists, so long as they leave the king at liberty to disperse their mobs.”

When they had gone a little farther, and the count and his youthful companion were in the middle of the wood, the sailor singled out a young birch-tree, pulled his horse up, and took out one of his pistols: the ball lodged in the centre of the tree, which was fifteen paces distant.

“ You see, my dear fellow, that I do not fear a duel,” said he, looking at M. Longueville with comic gravity.

“ Nor I either,” replied the latter, who cocking his pistol promptly, and taking aim at the hole made by the count’s bullet, lodged his own close to it.

“Now, that is what I call a well-trained youth,” said the sailor with a kind of enthusiasm.

During his ride with the young man, whom he already looked on as his nephew, he found a thousand opportunities for interrogating him about all those trifles, perfect familiarity with which constituted, according to his particular code, an accomplished gentleman.

“Are you in debt?” he inquired, after many questions.

“No, sir.”

“What, do you mean to say you pay all your tradesmen?”

“Punctually, sir; otherwise we should lose all credit and forfeit all respect.”

“But at least you have several mistresses? Ah—you blush, my friend. Manners have greatly changed. With these ideas of legal order, Kantism, and

liberty, youth has been spoiled. You have no Guimard, no Duthé, no creditors, and are quite ignorant of heraldry. Why, my young friend, you are not *educated*! Look you, he who does not sow his wild oats in spring, sows them in winter. If I am now, at the age of seventy, in receipt of an income of 80,000 francs, it is because I spent the capital which would produce it—when I was thirty—oh, with my wife in all honour and good faith. Your imperfections, however, shall not deter me from presenting you at Planat Lodge. Bear in mind that you have promised me to come thither, and I shall look forward to seeing you there.”

“What a funny little old man,” said young Longueville to himself. “He is brisk and gay; but for all his efforts to appear such a jolly good fellow, I shall not place too much confidence in him.”

The next day, at about four o'clock, when the company were scattered, some in the drawing-room, and some in the billiard-room, a servant announced to the inmates of Planat Lodge, "Monsieur de Longueville."

At the name of the favourite of the old Count de Kergarouët, every one, even the billiard-player who ran the risk of losing a hazard, rushed forward, as much with a view to studying the face of Mademoiselle de Fontaine, as to forming an opinion of the human phoenix who had obtained "honourable mention" at the expense of so many competitors. A dress as elegant as it was simple, manners full of ease, polished habits, a sweet voice that possessed a timbre which reached the heart-strings and caused them to vibrate, all combined to win for Monsieur Longueville the good will of the whole family. He

seemed no stranger to the luxury which reigned in the abode of the pompous receiver-general. Although he talked like a man of the world, it was obvious to every one that he had received the most brilliant training, and that his acquirements were as solid as they were extensive. In a light discussion about naval architecture, which was started by the old sailor, Longueville hit upon the right words so readily that one of the ladies pointed out that he seemed to have been educated at the *École Polytechnique*.

“ I consider, madame,” replied he, “ that one may regard it as an honourable distinction to have been there.”

In spite of much pressing, he politely but firmly opposed their wish to keep him to dinner, and put a stop to the observations of the ladies by saying, that he was the Hippocrates of a young sister,

whose delicate health required great attention.

“You are, no doubt, a doctor?” inquired one of Émilie’s sisters-in-law, ironically.

“The gentleman has just left the École Polytechnique,” replied Mademoiselle de Fontaine graciously. (Her face had assumed its richest tints when she learned that the young girl she had seen at the ball was M. Longueville’s sister.)

“But, my dear, it is possible to be a doctor, and yet to have been at the École Polytechnique; is it not, sir?”

“There is no obstacle whatever, madame,” replied the young man.

Every eye was directed at Émilie, who, at those words, looked at the engaging stranger with a sort of uneasy curiosity. She breathed more freely when he added, not without a smile, “I have not the honour, madame, to be a doctor, and have

even declined to enter the service of roads and bridges, in order to preserve my independence."

"And you did well," said the count. "But how could you consider it an honour to be a doctor?" added the noble Breton. "Oh, my young friend, for a man like you—"

"Monsieur le comte, I have an infinite respect for every profession which has a useful end in view."

"Oh, we are quite agreed; you respect such professions much in the same way as a young man respects a dowager."

The visit of M. Longueville was neither too long nor too short. He withdrew at the moment when he perceived that he had created a favourable impression upon every one, and that every one's curiosity was awakened about him.

"He's a knowing fellow," said the count

on returning to the drawing-room after showing him to the door.

Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who alone was in the secret of this visit, had dressed herself with such tasteful care as might have attracted the notice of the young man; but she had to undergo the slight mortification of observing that he did not devote to her so much attention as she thought she deserved. Her family were very much surprised at her reticence. As a rule, Émilie displayed on behalf of a new comer her coquetry, her witty chit-chat, and the inexhaustible eloquence of her looks and attitudes. Whether it were that the melodious accents and bewitching manners of the young man had acted as a charm upon her, that she was seriously in love, and that that feeling had worked a change in her, or not,—her bearing was now entirely free from affectation. In her

simplicity and naturalness she was sure to appear more beautiful than before. Some of her sisters and an old lady who was a friend of the family saw in her conduct a refinement of coquetry. They supposed that, deeming the young man a worthy mate for her, Emilie intended, perhaps, to unfold her excellences gradually, in order to dazzle him all at once, at the moment when she should have won his heart. Every member of the family was anxious to know what the capricious girl thought of the stranger; but when, during dinner, they all amused themselves by endowing M. Longueville with some new quality, each pretending to be the first to have discovered it, Mademoiselle de Fontaine was for some time silent. A gentle sarcasm from her uncle suddenly aroused her from her apathy. She said, in a very epigrammatic fashion, that this celestial perfection

must needs cover some grave defect, and that she would take good care not to form at the first glance an opinion of a man so skilful. "Those who thus please everybody please no one," she added, "and the worst of all defects is to be free from all." Like all young women when they love, Émilie nourished the hope that she would be able to hide her feeling in the bottom of her heart, by deceiving the Arguses by whom she was surrounded; but at the expiration of a fortnight, not a single member of that numerous family was uninitiated in the little domestic secret. At the third visit paid by M. Longueville, Émilie was convinced that she was in great measure the source of it. This discovery caused her a pleasure so intoxicating, that she was astonished at it when she reflected on it. It wounded her pride. Accustomed as she was to make herself the centre of

the world, she was now compelled to acknowledge the existence of a force which dragged her out of herself; she tried to rebel, but she could not dismiss from her heart the enchanting image of the young man. Then came many an anxious thought. Two of M. de Longueville's qualities, his unlooked-for modesty and his discretion, were very fatal to the general curiosity. He never talked of himself or his pursuits, or his family.

The adroit innuendoes with which Émilie interspersed her conversation, and the traps she laid in order to extract from the young man some personal details, he evaded and avoided with all the skill of a diplomatist who wants to conceal his policy. If she talked about pictures, M. Longueville answered her in the language of a connoisseur. If she played, the young man showed without conceit that

he was no mean performer on the piano. One evening he charmed the whole company by uniting his voice to Émilie's in one of the fine duets of Cimarosa ; but when they tried to find out whether he was a professional musician, he joked upon the subject with so good a grace, that he made it impossible for these ladies, who had had so much experience in the art of probing the feelings, to discover to what sphere of society he belonged. No matter what hardihood the old uncle displayed in throwing the grappling-irons upon this vessel, Longueville adroitly stole away, so as to preserve the charm of mystery ; and it was all the more easy for him to maintain the character of "The handsome stranger" at Planat Lodge, inasmuch as *there* inquisitiveness never exceeded the limit of politeness. Émilie, who was tortured by this reserve, hoped to be more

successful with the sister than with the brother, in regard to confidences of that kind. Backed by her uncle, who understood tactics of this sort, as well as he did the art of seamanship, Émilie endeavoured to bring upon the stage the character, as yet silent, of Mademoiselle Clara Longueville. The company at the lodge soon manifested the strongest desire to become acquainted with so amiable a person, and to contribute to her amusement. A dance was proposed and accepted. The ladies did not entirely despair of getting a young girl of sixteen to talk.

In spite, however, of such little clouds, created by curiosity and massed by suspicion, a brilliant ray penetrated the heart of Mademoiselle de Fontaine, who found great delight in existence by connecting it with a being other than herself. She began to understand social relations.

Whether it be that happiness improves us, or whether it were that Émilie was too much engaged to torment others, she became less caustic, more indulgent, and more gentle. The alteration in her character delighted her wondering relatives. Perchance, after all, her egotism was being metamorphosed into love. To await the arrival of her retiring and unacknowledged admirer, was a profound delight. Without a single word of passion having been breathed between them, Émilie knew that she was loved; and great was her pleasure in skilfully inducing the young man to exhibit the treasures of that knowledge which proved its own variety. She remarked that she also was the object of careful observation, and thereupon she tried to overcome all the defects which her training had allowed to grow up in her. Was not this a first homage offered to love,

and a cruel reproach addressed by herself to herself? She wished to please and charm; she loved and was idolized. Her family, knowing that her pride was an ample protection, allowed her sufficient freedom to enable her to taste those little childish joys, which give so much charm and so much strength to early love. Often did the young man and Mademoiselle de Fontaine tread alone, but for each other's company, the alleys of the park in which nature was decked by art, like a woman dressed for a ball. Often did they hold together those aimless and featureless conversations whose emptiest, idlest phrases are precisely those which contain the greatest amount of hidden feeling. Often did they admire, in each other's company, the setting sun, with its rich tints. They gathered daisies only to tear them to pieces, and sang the most passionate duets together,

employing the notes of Pergolese or Ros-sini as faithful interpreters for the expression of their secret thoughts.

The ball-day came ; Clara Longueville and her brother, whom the footman would persist in decorating with the particle which indicates nobility, were the heroes of the occasion. For the first time in her life, Mademoiselle de Fontaine witnessed the triumph of a young lady with delight. She showered upon Clara in all sincerity those graceful endearments and minute attentions which women do not generally bestow upon one another, except for the purpose of exciting the jealousy of men. Émilie had an object in view ; she wanted to elicit secrets unawares. But, as being a girl, Mademoiselle Longueville showed more deftness and ingenuity than her brother ; for she was discreet without even seeming to be so, and managed to exclude

the subjects of material interests from the conversation, while at the same time she invested it with so great a charm, that Mademoiselle de Fontaine conceived a kind of envy of her, and surnamed her *the siren*. Whereas Émilie had intended to make Clara chatter, it was Clara who subjected *her* to an interrogatory. She wanted to judge Clara and Clara judged her. She was often vexed with herself for having permitted her character to leak out through certain answers mischievously extorted from her by Clara, whose air of candour and of modesty dissipated every suspicion of design.

On one occasion, Émilie could not hide her annoyance at having allowed herself to be provoked by Clara into a sally against roturiers.

“Mademoiselle,” said that charming creature, “I have heard Maximilien talk

about you so much that from love for him, I felt the strongest desire to know you ; but is not a desire to know you, a desire to love you ? ”

“ My dear Clara, I was afraid I should displease you in talking thus of those who are not of noble birth.”

“ Oh ! make your mind easy. At the present day, discussions of this sort are perfectly objectless. As for me, they do not affect me ; I am out of the question.”

However arrogant this reply might be, it caused Mademoiselle de Fontaine the profoundest pleasure ; for, like all persons who are under the influence of passion, she interpreted it as oracles are interpreted, that is, in the sense which suited her inclinations ; and she rejoined the dancers more joyous than ever as she looked at Longueville, whose style and elegance perhaps

surpassed those of her ideal type. She experienced an additional satisfaction when she reflected that he was of noble birth ; her dark eyes glittered, and she danced with all the pleasure which a woman feels when she is dancing in the presence of the one she loves. Never did the lovers understand each other better than at that moment, and several times did they feel their fingers tingling and trembling as the exigencies of the quadrille brought them into contact.

Thus did early autumn overtake this handsome couple, surrounded by country fêtes and country diversions, allowing themselves to float on the stream of the sweetest feeling which life can offer, and heightening it by a thousand trifling details, which may be left to the imagination of the reader ; for in certain points all love affairs are alike. Each studied the other as much

as it is possible for two lovers to study one another.

“Well, never did a flirtation so speedily resolve itself into a marriage of inclination,” said the old uncle, who kept his eye upon the two young people as closely as a naturalist examines an insect under the microscope.

The expression frightened M. and Madame de Fontaine. The old Vendean ceased to be so indifferent in the matter of his daughter’s marriage, as he had formerly promised to be. He went to Paris in search of information, and came back without obtaining any. Uneasy at the mystery, and not yet knowing what might be the result of the inquiry which he had begged a man of business in Paris to set on foot as to the Longueville family, he deemed it his duty to warn his daughter to conduct herself prudently. Her father’s observation was

received with an assumed obedience, that was full of irony.

“ At least, my dear Émilie, if you love him, don’t confess it to him.”

“ Father, it is true that I love him, but I will not tell him so until you give me leave to do so.”

“ But, Émilie, consider that as yet you know nothing of his family or his position in life.”

“ If I am ignorant, it is my wish to be so. But, father, you wanted to see me married ; you left me at liberty to make my choice ; it is made irrevocably ; what more is needful ? ”

“ You must learn, my dear child, whether the man of your choice is the son of a peer of France,” replied the venerable nobleman, ironically.

Émilie was silent for a moment, but shortly raised her head, looked at her father,

and said to him somewhat anxiously, "Are the Longuevilles then—?"

"—Extinct in the person of the old Duc de Rostein-Limbourg, who perished on the scaffold in 1793. He was the last scion of the last younger branch."

"But father, there are some very good families which have sprung from bastards. The history of France swarms with princes who bore the bend sinister on their shield."

"Your ideas are greatly changed," said the old gentleman, smiling.

The morrow was the last day that the De Fontaine family were to pass at Planat Lodge. Émilie, who had been not a little disturbed by her father's intimation, awaited with keen impatience the hour at which young Longueville was wont to arrive, in order to get an explanation from him. She went out after dinner for a

solitary walk in the park, directing her steps to the grove of confidences, whither, she knew, the impetuous young man would go to look for her. As she went she debated in her mind upon the best method of surprising so important a secret without compromising herself—no easy matter. Up to the present moment, no open avowal had sanctioned the feeling which bound her to this stranger. She had, like Maximilien, savoured in secret the sweetness of first love; but they were both equally proud, and it seemed that both of them were afraid to own their feelings.

Maximilien Longueville, whom Clara had inspired with some suspicions as to Émilie's disposition, which were not without foundation, had been, by turns, carried away by the violence of a young man's passion, and held back by a desire to know and test the woman to whom he was about to en-

trust his happiness. His love had not precluded him from observing that Émilie was under the influence of prejudices which spoiled her youthful nature ; but he wanted to learn whether she loved him, before trying to fight against them ; for he was as reluctant to risk the fate of his love as that of his existence. He had accordingly maintained a silence which his looks, his attitude, and his slightest action belied. On the other hand, the pride, so natural to a girl, and which was enhanced in the case of Mademoiselle de Fontaine by the stupid vanity excited by her birth and beauty, prevented her from going half-way to meet a declaration, which her growing love sometimes impelled her to court. Thus, the two lovers had instinctively comprehended their position, without exactly explaining their secret motives to themselves. There are moments in life when the vague has a

charm for youthful minds. From the very fact of their having both too long put off speaking, they both seemed to be making a cruel sport of their delay. The one seemed to be trying to discover whether he was loved, from the effort which an avowal would cost his haughty mistress, while the other hoped that every moment would see the rupture of a too respectful silence.

Seated on a rustic bench, Émilie was reflecting on the events which had occurred during these three months, that had been so full of enchantment. Her father's suspicions were the last apprehensions which could assail her; she even despatched them by two or three of such reflections as might occur to an inexperienced girl, and which seemed to her decisive. Above all, she came to the conclusion that it was impossible she could be deceived. She had failed throughout the season to

discover in Maximilien a single gesture, or a single word, which indicated a plebeian origin or plebeian occupations. Better still, his mode of discussing a subject bespoke a man who was occupied with the highest interests of the country. "Moreover," she argued with herself, "a professional man, a financier, or a merchant, would not have had leisure to spend the whole season in paying his addresses to me, in the midst of the woods and fields, as lavish of his time as a nobleman who has before him a long lifetime, void of occupation." She was yielding herself to the current of a meditation much more interesting to her than these preliminary thoughts, when a slight rustling of the foliage informed her that for some little time Maximilien had been looking at her, admiringly without doubt.

"Do you know that it is very ill-bred to

take young ladies by surprise like that ? ” she asked, smiling.

“ Especially when they are engrossed by their secrets,” replied Maximilien craftily.

“ Why should I not have my secrets ? You certainly have yours.”

“ You really were thinking of your secrets then ? ” said Maximilien, with a laugh.

“ No, I was thinking of yours. I know my own.”

“ But, perhaps,” said the young man slowly, as he seized the arm of Mademoiselle de Fontaine, and drew it through his own, “ perhaps my secrets are yours, and yours mine.”

After walking a short distance, they found themselves under a clump of trees, which the rays of the setting sun were covering with a cloud of brownish red. Nature’s magic invested the passing moment with a sort of solemnity. The life

and freedom of the young man's movements, and still more the agitation of his overflowing heart, whose quick pulsations spoke to the arm of Émilie, threw her into a state of excitement, which was all the more eloquent, because it was called forth only by the simplest and most innocent accidents. The reserve by which the young ladies of the great world are habitually surrounded, gives an incredible strength to their explosions of feeling, which is one of the greatest dangers to which they are exposed, when they meet with a passionate lover. Never had the eyes of Émilie and Maximilien said so many things which the lips dare not utter. A prey to this intoxication, they readily forgot the frail conventions of pride and the frigid considerations of distrust. The only form of expression they could find at first, was a pressure of the hand, which

served as an interpretation of their joyous thoughts.

“I have one question to put to you,” said Mademoiselle de Fontaine, trembling, and with a voice full of emotion, after a long silence, and after they had taken a few slow steps forward; but I beg you to consider, that it is in some sort forced upon me, by the very strange position in which I am placed with regard to my family.”

A pause that was terrible to Émilie succeeded these words, which she had uttered with something approaching a stammer. During the time occupied by this pause, this proud young woman did not dare to encounter the ardent gaze of the man she loved, for she had a secret consciousness of the baseness of the ensuing words, as she added, “Are you of noble birth?”

When these last words had been uttered,

she could have wished herself at the bottom of a lake.

“Mademoiselle,” said Longueville gravely, as his altered countenance assumed an air of severe dignity, “I promise you that I will give a direct answer to that question, when you have replied with sincerity to that which I am about to put to you.” He dropped the arm of the young girl, who suddenly felt herself alone in the world, and said to her, “What is your object in questioning me as to my birth?” Émilie remained cold, mute, and motionless.

“Mademoiselle,” resumed Maximilien, “let us proceed no farther unless we understand each other—*I love you*,” he added in a deep and tender voice. “Well, then,” he continued, with a glad look when he had heard the exclamation of delight which the young girl could not repress, “*why* do you ask me whether I am of noble birth?”

“Would he talk like that unless he were?” said an inward voice, which, Émilie believed, issued from the depths of her heart. Thereupon she graciously raised her head, seemed to find new life in the young man’s look, and held out her arm to him, as if to form a fresh alliance.

“You thought that I attached great importance to dignities?” she asked, with mischievous subtilty.

“I have no titles to offer to my wife,” he replied, with an air half gay, half serious. “But if I take her from a high position, and from among those whose father’s wealth has made luxury and the pleasures of opulence habitual to them, I know the duty which my choice imposes on me. Love gives all,” he added gaily, “but only to lovers,—as to married folks, they need something more than the dome of heaven and the carpets of the meadows.”

“He is rich,” thought she. “As to titles, perhaps he wants to try me. He has been told that I am wedded to nobility, and that I will not marry any one but a peer of France. My impertinent sisters have played me that trick.”

“I assure you, sir,” she said aloud, “that I have had most exaggerated views of life and of the world; but now” (this was said intentionally, and as she spoke she looked at him in a manner that might well have driven him mad) “*now* I know where it is that a woman must look for real wealth.”

“I wish to believe that you are speaking from the heart,” replied he with gentle gravity. “But this winter, my dear Émilie, in less than two months perhaps, I shall have reason to be proud of the offers that I can make you—if you care for the pleasures of affluence. That is the only

secret which I shall bury *there*," said he, pointing to his heart, "for upon its success depends my happiness, I dare not say *ours*."

"Oh, say so, say so."

Amid the sweetest talk they returned with slow steps to rejoin the company in the drawing-room. Never had Mademoiselle de Fontaine found her lover more agreeable or more witty. His well-shaped form and engaging manners seemed to her more charming than ever, after the conversation, which seemed in some sort to secure her in the possession of a heart which any woman might covet. The lovers sang an Italian duet together with so much enthusiasm that the assembled company applauded them. Their farewell assumed a conventional aspect, beneath which they concealed their happiness. In short, that day acted as a

chain, which bound Émilie more closely still to the fortunes of the stranger. The force and dignity which he had displayed in the scene, during which they had revealed their feelings to each other, had perhaps imposed upon Mademoiselle de Fontaine that respect for her lover without which there is no such thing as genuine love.

When she was left alone with her father in the drawing-room, the venerable Vendean went up to her, took her kindly by the hand, and asked her whether she had gathered any information which threw light upon the fortune and family of M. Longueville.

“Yes, dear father,” she replied. “I am happier than I could ever wish to be. In short, Monsieur de Longueville is the only man whom I should wish to wed.”

“That’s well, Émilie,” replied the count.
“I know what remains for me to do.”

“Is it possible that you know of any impediment?” asked Émilie, with unfeigned anxiety.

“My dear child, this young man is altogether unknown, but unless he be a dishonest man, he is, the moment that you love him, as dear to me as a son.”

“A dishonest man?” continued Émilie.
“I am quite easy upon that score. My uncle, who introduced him to us, can answer for him. Tell me, dear uncle, has he been a freebooter, a pirate, or a corsair?”

“I knew well that it would come to this,” cried the old sailor, waking up.

He looked round the drawing-room, but his niece had disappeared like a St. Elmo’s fire, to employ his habitual expression.

“Well, uncle,” resumed M. de Fon-

taine, "how could you conceal from us all that you knew about this youth? Our anxiety could not have escaped your notice. Is M. de Longueville a man of family?"

"I don't know him from Adam or Eve," exclaimed the Comte de Kergaroët. "Confiding in the tact of that little madcap, I brought her her Saint-Preux, by a manœuvre which I understand. I know that the lad is an excellent shot with the pistol, is a good sportsman, and plays billiards, chess, and backgammon to perfection, while he fences and rides like the late Chevalier de Saint Georges. He has the devil's own knowledge of all that appertains to our vineyards. He can calculate like Barême, and is a good hand at drawing, dancing, and singing. Why, what the deuce is the matter with you folks? If that doesn't make a perfect

gentleman, show me a bourgeois who can do all that ; find me the man who lives as much like a gentleman as he does. Does he follow any occupation ? Does he compromise his dignity by going to an office, by bowing and scraping to the upstarts whom you call directors-general ? He holds his head up—he is a man. But, moreover, I have just recovered in my waistcoat pocket, the card which he gave me, when he thought that I wanted to cut his throat for him, poor simpleton ! (The young men of to-day are not very sharp.) See, here it is.”

“ Rue du Sentier, number five,” said M. de Fontaine, trying to recall, amidst all the information which he had obtained, something which might have reference to the young stranger. “ What the deuce does that mean ? Messieurs Palma, Werbrust, et Compagnie, whose principal trade is

wholesale dealings in muslin, calico, and prints, carry on business at that address. Good; I have it; Longueville the deputy, has an interest in their firm. Yes; but the only son of Longueville I know of, is thirty-two, and does not in any way resemble our Longueville; he is going to give that son 50,000 livres a year, in order that he may marry the daughter of a minister; for like every one else he wants to be made a peer. I have never heard him mention this Maximilien. Then, has he a daughter? Who is this Clara? Moreover, more than one adventurer may call himself Longueville. But the house of Palma, Werbrust, & Co., has been half ruined by some speculation in Mexico, or the Indies. I will clear this matter up."

"You are soliloquizing, for all the world, as if you were on the stage, and you seem to reckon me a mere cypher," said the

old sailor suddenly. "You don't seem to be aware that if he is a gentleman, I have more than one bag under my hatchways to make up for his want of fortune."

"For that matter, if he be a son of Longueville's, he is in no want of money," said M. de Fontaine, shaking his head from right to left, "but his father has not yet bought his snob-wash. Before the revolution he was an attorney, and as for the 'de' which since the Restoration he has placed before his name, he has as much right to that as to the one-half of his fortune."

"Pooh, pooh! happy are they whose fathers have been hanged," cried the old sailor gaily.

Three or four days after this memorable day, on one of those beautiful mornings in the month of November, when the Parisians see their boulevards cleansed by

the refreshing cold of a first frost, Mademoiselle de Fontaine, arrayed in a new set of furs, which she wished to render fashionable, had gone out with two of her sisters-in-law, at whom she had formerly aimed the larger portion of her epigrams. The three women had been induced to undertake this drive through Paris, far less by their desire to try a very elegant new carriage, and to wear the dresses which were to give the tone to the winter fashions, than by their desire to look at a tippet which one of their friends had noticed in a grand linen-draper's shop at the corner of the Rue de la Paix. When the three ladies had entered the shop, Madame de Fontaine (the baroness), pulled Emilie's sleeve, and pointed out to her Maximilien Longueville, who was seated at the counter, and was giving, with truly mercantile grace, change for a piece of

gold to the forewoman of the establishment, with whom he seemed to be holding a consultation.

“The handsome stranger” held in his hand certain samples, which left no doubt as to the nature of his honourable calling. Unbeknown to all, Émilie was seized with an icy shudder. Thanks, however, to the *savoir-vivre* which good society confers, she completely concealed the rage which devoured her heart, and said to her sister, with a richness of accent and intonation which might have aroused the envy of the most celebrated actress of the age,—

“I knew it.” She then drew near to the counter, Longueville raised his head, put the samples into his pocket with inimitable coolness, bowed to Mademoiselle de Fontaine, and, drawing near to her, cast at her a searching glance.

“Mademoiselle,” said he to the fore-

woman, who looked at him with an uneasy air, "I will send and settle the account; such is the wish of the firm. But stay," said he in a whisper to the young woman, giving her a bank note for a thousand francs, "take this; it is a private matter between ourselves."

"—You will pardon me, mademoiselle," said he, turning to Émilie, "you will have the goodness to excuse the tyranny which business exercises over us."

"It seems to me, sir, that it is a matter of supreme indifference to me," responded Mademoiselle de Fontaine, looking at him with a hardihood and an appearance of sarcastic indifference, which might well create the impression that she had never seen him before.

"Are you in earnest?" asked Maximilien, in a broken voice.

Émilie turned her back to him with in-

credible insolence. The few words which had passed between them had escaped her two inquisitive sisters-in-law. When the three ladies had secured the tippet and reseated themselves in the carriage, Émilie, who occupied the front seat, could not help casting one last all-embracing look into the depths of the odious shop, and there saw Maximilien, in the attitude of a man who was superior to the misfortune which had so suddenly overtaken him. Their eyes met and exchanged two implacable glances. Each of them hoped to inflict a cruel wound upon the heart of the loved one. In an instant they found themselves as far removed from one another as if one of them had been in China, and the other in Greenland. Has not vanity a breath that withers all it meets? Distracted by the most violent conflict which can possibly agitate the breast of a young

woman, Mademoiselle de Fontaine reaped at that moment the most abundant harvest of sorrow that prejudice and littleness ever sowed in human soul. Her face, that had been so smooth and fresh, was now streaked with yellow stripes and patches of red, while at times the white of her cheeks would suddenly turn green. Hoping to hide her sufferings from her sisters, she would point out to them some ridiculous passenger, or some absurd dress, and laugh. But the laugh was convulsive. She felt more deeply wounded by the silent compassion of her sisters, than she would have been by the epigrams by which they might have taken their revenge. She exercised all her ingenuity in endeavouring to draw them into a discussion, in which she sought to give vent to her anger, by insane paradoxes; seeking to overwhelm tradesmen with biting insults, and epigrams

in very bad taste. When she reached home, she was attacked by a fever, which seemed at first to be of a dangerous type ; but at the end of a month, she was restored to her prayerful family, through the tender care of her parents and her physician. Every one hoped that this lesson would be severe enough to soften Émilie's disposition ; but she gradually resumed her old habits, and once more dashed out into the world. She maintained that there was no disgrace in having been deceived. She would say that if, like her father, she had any influence in the House, she would propose a law providing that merchants, especially calico-merchants, should be branded on the forehead, like the sheep of Le Berri, to the third generation. She wished that only noblemen had the privilege of wearing those old fashioned French costumes, which so well became the cour-

tiers of Louis Quinze. To hear her, it was perhaps a misfortune for the monarchy that there was no visible distinction between a shopkeeper and a peer of France. A thousand other witticisms, easy to be guessed, followed one another in quick succession, when some unforeseen accident set her upon the topic. But those who loved Émilie could discern through her satire a tinge of melancholy. It was clear that Maximilien Longueville still reigned in the depths of her inexplicable heart. Sometimes she became gentle, as during the fugitive season which witnessed the birth of her passion ; and sometimes also she grew insupportable. Every one forgave the inequalities of temper, which had their origin in sufferings that were at the same time secret and well known. The Count de Kergarouët obtained some slight influence over her, thanks to increased liberality,

a species of consolation which rarely fails to have some effect upon the fair youthful denizens of Paris. The first ball that Mademoiselle de Fontaine went to after her recovery, was that of the Neapolitan ambassador. Just as she was taking up her position in the most brilliant quadrille set, she saw within a few paces of her, Longueville, who slightly nodded to her partner.

“Is that young man one of your friends?” she inquired of her cavalier, with an air of scorn.

“Only my brother,” he replied.

Émilie could not refrain from shuddering.

“Ah,” continued her partner in an enthusiastic tone of voice, “he is indeed the finest fellow in the world. . . .”

“Do you know what my name is?” interposed Émilie with emphasis.

“No, mademoiselle. It is, I confess, a crime to have forgotten a name that is on every lip; nay, I ought to say in every heart; but I have a valid excuse; I am only just returned from Germany. My ambassador, who is at Paris on leave of absence, sent me here this evening to act as chaperon to his amiable wife, whom you may see yonder in a corner.”

“A regular tragic mask,” said Émilie, when she had scrutinized the ambassadress.

“That, however, is her ball-room countenance,” replied the young man, laughing. “It is my bounden duty to ask her to dance; and accordingly I wanted some compensation.”

At this compliment Mademoiselle de Fontaine bowed.

“I was very much surprised,” continued the talkative attaché, “to find my brother here. On my arrival from Vienna, I learned

that the poor boy was ill in bed, and I fully reckoned on seeing him before coming to the ball; but politics do not always allow us leisure to have such a thing as family affection. The *padrona della casa* prevented me from going up to see poor Maximilien."

"Your brother is not engaged in the diplomatic service as you are?" asked Émilie.

"No," said the attaché, sighing, "he sacrificed himself on my account. He and my sister Clara have relinquished their share of my father's fortune, in order that he might create an entail in my favour. My father, like all those who vote for ministers, dreams of a peerage. He has a promise to that effect," he added in an undertone. "Having got together a certain amount of capital, my brother became a partner in some banking establishment, and I know that he has just engaged in some speculation in Brazil,

which may make him a millionaire. You see me quite rejoiced at having contributed, through my diplomatic relations, to his success. I am even now impatiently waiting for a despatch from the Brazilian legation, which will be of a description to make him unknot his brow. What do you think of him ? ”

“ But your brother’s face does not appear to me to be that of a man who is engaged in money-making,”

The young diplomatist cast one searching glance upon the seemingly untroubled face of his partner.

“ What,” he exclaimed with a smile, “ young ladies then can read love thoughts also, beneath dumb foreheads ? ”

“ Is your brother in love ? ” she inquired, with a gesture indicative of curiosity.

“ Yes ; my sister Clara, of whom he takes a mother’s care, wrote to tell me that he had

fallen in love with a very pretty person, this summer ; but since then I have had no news about his love affairs. Would you believe that the poor boy used to get up at five o'clock in the morning, and go and do his business, in order that he might reach the country-house of his young lady at four in the afternoon ? the consequence being that he ruined a beautiful blood horse, which I had sent him. Forgive my chatter, mademoiselle ; I am just come from Germany. For the last year I have not heard French correctly spoken. I have been weaned from French and surfeited with German faces to such an extent, that in my patriotic enthusiasm I believe I could talk to the figures on a Parisian candlestick. Then again if I chatter away with a freedom which is very unbecoming in a diplomatist, the fault is yours, mademoiselle. For, was it not you

who pointed out my brother? When he is the subject of conversation, I am inexhaustible; I should like to be able to tell the whole world how good and generous he is. The amount involved was no less than 100,000 francs a year, which is the value of the Longueville estate!"

If Mademoiselle de Fontaine obtained these important revelations, she owed them in part to the skill she displayed in interrogating her confiding partner, from the moment when she found that he was the brother of the lover whom she had spurned.

"And could you see your brother selling muslin and calico without feeling some annoyance?" asked Émilie, after finishing the third figure of the quadrille.

"How did you know that?" asked the diplomatist. "Like all the young diplomats of my acquaintance, I have already,

thank God, acquired the art of saying only what I wish to say, even while indulging in a torrent of words."

"It was you who told me, I assure you."

Monsieur de Longueville looked at Mademoiselle de Fontaine with an astonishment that was full of perspicacity. A suspicion entered his mind. He interrogated the eyes, first of his brother, then of his partner, guessed everything, pressed his hands together, raised his eyes to the ceiling, began to laugh, and said,—

"I am no better than a fool. You are the prettiest woman in the room; my brother looks at you sideways, dances in spite of his fever, and you pretend not to see him. Make him a happy man" said he as he led her back to her old uncle. "I shall not be jealous of him; but I shall always tremble a little when I call you my sister."

The two lovers however were destined to be inexorable towards each other. At about two o'clock in the morning a light supper was served, in an immense gallery, in which the tables were arranged as they are in restaurants, so as to leave persons in the same set at liberty to foregather if they chose. By one of those strokes of chance which are continually happening to lovers, Mademoiselle de Fontaine found herself at a table adjoining that at which the most distinguished members of the party were assembled. Maximilien was one of the group. Émilie, who lent an attentive ear to the talk that was going on among her neighbours, overheard one of those conversations which are so easily established between young women and young men possessing the graces and the bearing of Maximilien Longueville. The interlocutress of the young banker was a Neapolitan duchess, whose eyes darted

lightnings and whose white skin shone like satin. The intimacy which young Longueville pretended to exist between him and this lady wounded Mademoiselle de Fontaine all the more, inasmuch as she had just bestowed upon her lover twenty times as much regard as she had formerly entertained for him.

“Yes, monsieur, in my country true love shrinks from no sacrifice whatever,” said the duchess, smirking.

“You are more passionate than French women are,” said Maximilien, whose kindling glance fell full upon Émilie ; “they are all vanity.”

“Monsieur,” said the young girl sharply, “is it not an unworthy action to traduce your country ? Self-abnegation belongs to all countries alike.”

“Do you think, mademoiselle,” pursued the Italian lady with a sardonic smile, “that

a Parisian woman is capable of following her lover wherever he may go ? ”

“ Oh, let us not misunderstand each other, madame. We would go to the desert, to live there in a tent, but we don’t go and sit in a shop.”

She wound up her opinion with a gesture of disdain.

Thus the influence upon Émilie of her fatal bringing-up destroyed for the second time her budding happiness, and marred her career. The seeming coldness of Maximilien, and a woman’s smile, had extorted from her one of those sarcasms, whose treacherous delights were ever leading her astray.

“ Mademoiselle,” said Longueville to her in a low voice, under cover of the noise made by the ladies in quitting the tables, “ no one will form more ardent wishes for your happiness than I shall ; allow me to

give you that assurance, in bidding you farewell. In a few days I shall start for Italy."

"With a duchess, doubtless?"

"No, mademoiselle; but with a mortal malady, perhaps."

"Isn't that a mere fancy?" inquired Émilie, with an uneasy look.

"Not so," said he. "There are some wounds which never heal."

"You will not start," said the imperious young damsel, with a smile.

"Yes I shall," said Maximilien seriously.

"You will find me married on your return, I give you warning," said she coquettishly.

"I hope I may."

"The coxcomb," said Émilie. "He revenges himself cruelly enough."

Fifteen days afterwards Maximilien Longueville and his sister Clara set out for

the warm and poetical climes of lovely Italy, leaving Mademoiselle de Fontaine a prey to the most violent regret. The young attaché embraced his brother's quarrel and contrived to visit Émilie's disdain with a striking retribution, by publicly announcing the grounds of the rupture between the two lovers. He repaid with usury to his partner at the ball, the sarcasms which she had formerly hurled at Maximilien, and often drew a smile from more than one minister, as he described the fair enemy of counters, the Amazon who preached a crusade against bankers, the young lady whose love had evaporated at the sight of half a foot of muslin. The Comte de Fontaine was obliged to use his influence in procuring for Auguste Longueville a mission to Russia, in order to withdraw his daughter from the ridicule which that young and

formidable persecutor poured upon her in such abundance. Shortly afterwards the ministry, being compelled to raise a levy of peers, in order to strengthen the aristocratic vote, which was falling off in the upper chamber, under the influence of the oratory of an illustrious writer, made Monsieur *Guiraudin* de Longueville a peer of France and a viscount. Monsieur de Fontaine likewise obtained a peerage, a reward due not only to his name, which was missing from the hereditary chamber, but also to his fidelity during the evil days of the monarchy.

About this time Émilie, who was now of age, indulged, no doubt, in some serious reflections on life, for she evidently changed her tone and manners. Instead of exerting herself to say unpleasant things to her uncle, she showered upon him the most affectionate attentions, brought him his

crutch with a perseverance which excited the laughter of the wags; gave him her arm to lean on, rode in his carriage with him, and accompanied him whenever he went out. She persuaded him that she even liked the smell of his pipe, and read to him his dear *Quotidienne* in the midst of the puffs of tobacco smoke, which the mischievous sailor designedly blew towards her. She studied piquet in order to be a match for the old count, and, to crown all, this most whimsical of young women listened patiently to the periodic recitals of the combat of the “Belle Poule,” of the manœuvrings of the “Ville de Paris,” of the first expedition of M. de Suffren, and of the battle of Aboukir. Although the old sailor had often said that he knew his latitude and longitude too well to allow himself to be captured by a young corvette, the *salons* of Paris one fine morning heard

of the marriage of Mademoiselle de Fontaine and the Comte de Kergarouët. The young countess gave splendid entertainments, in order to drown reflection; but she doubtlessly felt a sense of emptiness at the bottom of the whirl of gaiety. Luxury did but imperfectly conceal the void and the unhappiness of her suffering heart; and her handsome face, in spite of the outbursts of a fictitious gaiety, generally betrayed a mute melancholy. Émilie seemed, moreover, to be full of attention and regard for her aged husband, who would often say, as he went off to his own private room in the evening, to the sound of a gay orchestra, "I don't seem to be the same man. Must I needs wait till I was seventy-two to embark as pilot on board the Belle-Émilie, after twenty years in the galleys of matrimony?" The conduct of the countess was marked by so much austerity, that the most

quick-sighted criticism had nothing to lay hold of. The on-lookers came to the conclusion that the count had reserved the right of disposing of his fortune, in order to bind his wife more closely to him,—a supposition that was insulting both to the uncle and to the niece. The attitude of the husband and wife was, moreover, so judiciously planned, that the young men, who were most interested in discovering the secrets of the household, could not find out whether the old count treated his wife as a husband or as a father. He was frequently heard to remark that he had picked up his niece as a woman who had been shipwrecked, and that formerly he had never presumed upon his hospitality when he happened to save an enemy from the fury of the tempest. Although the countess aspired to reign in Paris, and endeavoured to march abreast with the

Duchesses de Maufrigneuse and de Chaulieu, the Marchionesses d'Espard and d'Aiglemont, the Countesses Féraud, de Montcornet, de Restaud, Madame de Camps, and Mademoiselle des Touches, she gave no encouragement to the passion of the young Vicomte de Portenduère, who made her his idol.

Two years after her marriage, in one of the antique drawing-rooms of the Faubourg St. Germain, where her character was regarded with admiration, and deemed worthy of the olden time, Émilie heard the servant announce, "Monsieur le Vicomte de Longueville."

In the corner of the drawing-room in which she was seated, playing piquet with the Bishop of Persepolis, her emotion could not attract the attention of any one, but, on turning her head, she witnessed the arrival of her former admirer, in all the éclat of

his youth. The death of his father, and that of his elder brother, who had succumbed to the inclement climate of St. Petersburg, had devolved upon the head of Maximilien the hereditary plumes of the cap of a peer. His fortune was on a par with his attainments and his worth. The very day before, his youthful and impetuous eloquence had enlightened the Assembly. At this moment, he appeared before the sorrowing countess, unmarried and adorned with all those advantages which she had formerly required from her ideal type. Every mother with marriageable daughters was making seductive advances to a young man who was endowed with those good qualities, for which those who admired his graceful bearing gave him credit. But Émilie knew better than any one, that the Vicomte de Longueville possessed that firmness of character, in which prudent

women perceive a guarantee for happiness. She cast her eyes upon the admiral, who, according to his own familiar phrase, seemed likely to stick to his ship for a long time, and cursed the errors of her childhood.

At that moment the Bishop of Persepolis said to her with his episcopal grace, “ Fair lady, you have discarded the king of hearts, and I have won. But do not regret your money : I keep it for my little schools.”

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